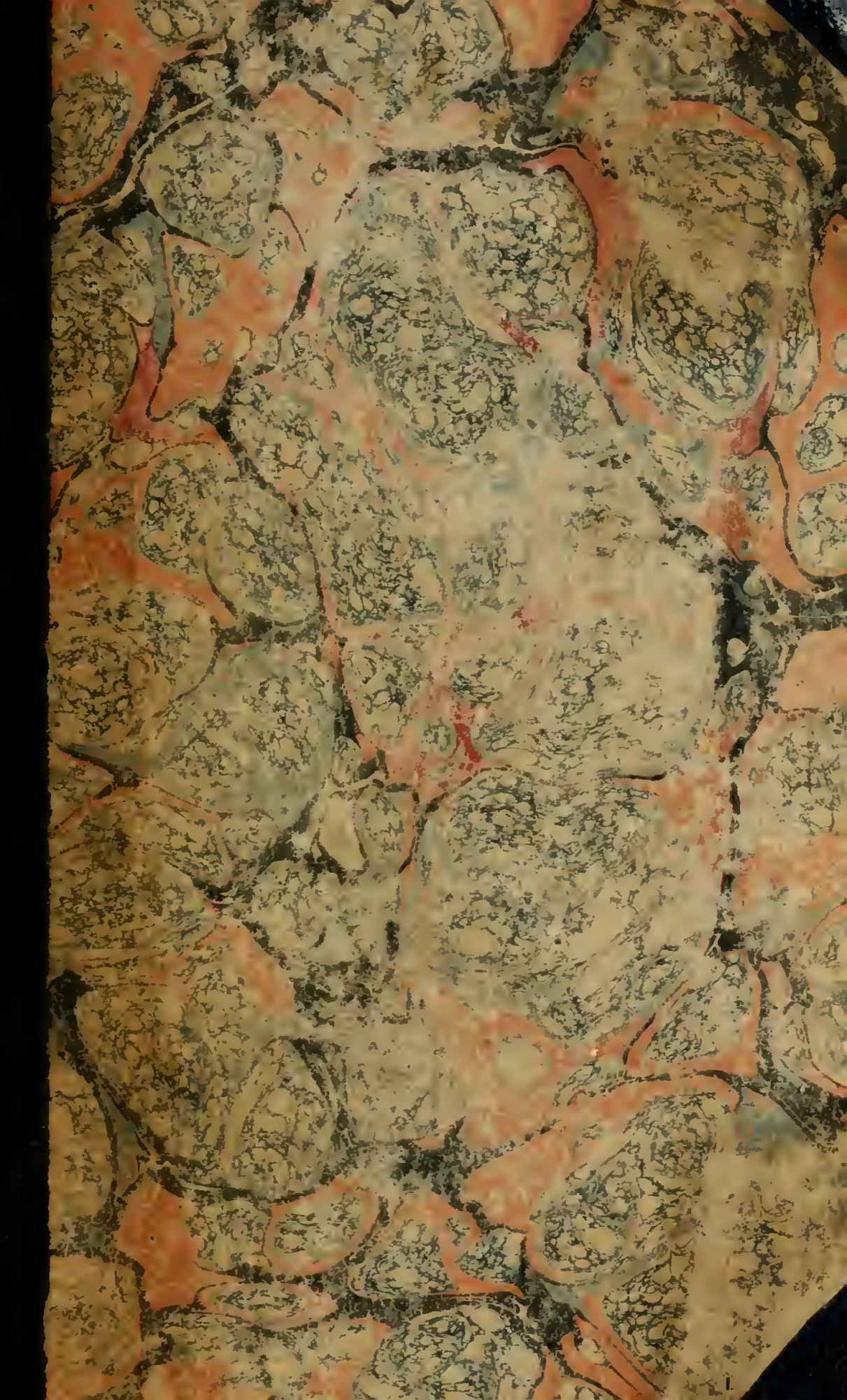

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Pocket Edition of

Ossian's Poems.

Translated by James M.ᶜ Pherson, Esq.ʳ

with the Principal Dissertations on the

Era and Poems of the Author.

VOL. I.

Superbly Embellished

Vide Fingal Book I. p. 2.

, Printer.

THE

Poems of Ossian,

THE

SON OF FINGAL.

TRANSLATED BY

JAMES MACPHERSON, Esq.

which are prefixed

DISSERTATIONS ON THE ERA AND POEMS OF OSSIAN.

IN TWO VOLUMES,

EMBELLISHED WITH ENGRAVINGS.

We may boldly assign Ossian a place among those whose works are to last for ages. BLAIR.

VOL. I.

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A DISSERTATION CONCERNING

THE ERA OF OSSIAN.

INQUIRIES into the antiquities of nations afford more pleasure than any real advantage to mankind. The ingenious may form systems of history on probabilities and a few facts; but at a great distance of time, their accounts must be vague and uncertain. The infancy of states and kingdoms is as destitute of great events, as of the means of transmitting them to posterity. The arts of polished life, by which alone facts can be preserved with certainty, are the productions of a well-formed community. It is then historians begin to write, and public transactions to be worthy remembrance. The actions of former times are left in obscurity, or magnified by uncertain traditions. Hence it is that we find so much of the marvellous in the origin of every nation; posterity being always ready to believe any thing, however fabulous, that reflects honour on their ancestors. The Greeks and Romans were remarkable for this weakness. They swallowed the most absurd fables concerning the high antiquities of their respective nations. Good historians, however, rose very early amongst them, and transmitted, with lustre, their great actions to posterity. It is to them that they owe that unrivalled fame they now enjoy, while the great actions of other nations are involved in fables, or lost in obscurity. The Celtic nations afford a striking instance of this kind. They, though once the masters of Europe, from the mouth of the river Oby,[a] in Russia, to Cape Finisterre, the western point of Gallicia in Spain, are very little mentioned in history. They trusted their fame to tradition and the songs of their bards, which, by the vicissitude of

[a] Plin. l.

human affairs, are long since lost. Their ancient language is the only monument that remains of them: and the traces of it being found in places so widely distant from each other, serves only to shew the extent of their ancient power, but throws very little light on their history.

Of all the Celtic nations, that which possessed old Gaul is the most renowned; not perhaps on account of worth superior to the rest, but for their wars with a people who had historians to transmit the fame of their enemies, as well as their own, to posterity. Britain was first peopled by them, according to the testimony of the best authors[a]; its situation in respect to Gaul makes the opinion probable; but what puts it beyond all dispute, is, that the same customs and language prevailed among the inhabitants of both in the days of Julius Cæsar[b].

The colony from Gaul possessed themselves, at first, of that part of Britain which was next their own country; and spreading northward, by degrees, as they increased in numbers, peopled the whole island. Some adventurers passing over from those parts of Britain that were within sight of Ireland, were the founders of the Irish nation; which is a more probable story than the idle fables of Milesian and Gallician colonies. Diodorus Siculus[c] mentions it as a thing well known in his time, that the inhabitants of Ireland were originally Britons; and his testimony is unquestionable, when we consider that, for many ages, the language and customs of both nations were the same.

Tacitus was of opinion that the ancient Caledonians were of German extract. By the language and customs which always prevailed in the north of Scotland, and which are undoubtedly Celtic, one would be tempted to differ in opinion from that celebrated writer. The Germans[d], properly so called, were not the same with the ancient Celtæ. The manners and customs of the two nations were similar; but their language different. The Germans are the genuine descendants of the Daæ,

a Cæs. l. 5. Tac. Agric. l. 1. c. 2. b Cæs. Pomp. Mel. Tacitus. c Diod. Sic. l. 5.
d Strabo, l. 7.

afterwards well known by the name of Daci, and passed originally into Europe by the way of the northern countries, and settled beyond the Danube, towards the vast regions of Transilvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia; and from thence advanced by degrees into Germany. The Celtæ[e], it is certain, sent many colonies into that country, all of whom retained their own laws, language, and customs; and it is of them, if any colonies came from Germany into Scotland, that the ancient Caledonians were descended.

But whether the Caledonians were a colony of the Celtic Germans, or the same with the Gauls that first possessed themselves of Britain, is a matter of no moment at this distance of time. Whatever their origin was, we find them very numerous in the time of Julius Agricola, which is a presumption that they were long before settled in the country. The form of their government was a mixture of aristocracy and monarchy, as it was in all the countries where the druids held the chief sway. This order of men seems to have been formed on the same system with the Dactyli, Idæi, and Curetes of the ancients. Their pretended intercourse with heaven, their magic and divinations, were the same. The knowledge of the druids in natural causes, and the properties of certain things, the fruit of the experiments of ages, gained them a mighty reputation among the people. The esteem of the populace soon increased into a veneration for the order; which a cunning and ambitious tribe of men took care to improve, to such a degree, that they, in a manner, ingrossed the management of civil, as well as religious matters. It is generally allowed, that they did not abuse their extraordinary power: the preserving their character of sanctity was so essential to their influence, that they never broke out into violence or oppression. The chiefs were allowed to execute the laws, but the legislative power was entirely in the hands of the druids[f]. It was by their authority that the tribes were united, in times of the greatest danger, under one head. This

e Cæs. l. 6. Liv. l. 5. Tac. de mor. Germ. f Cæs. l. 6.

temporary king, or Vergobretus[a], was chosen by them, and generally laid down his office at the end of the war. These priests long enjoyed this extraordinary privilege among the Celtic nations who lay beyond the pale of the Roman empire. It was in the beginning of the second century that their power among the Caledonians began to decline. The poems that celebrate Trathal and Cormac, ancestors to Fingal, are full of particulars concerning the fall of the druids, which accounts for the total silence concerning their religion in the poems that are now offered to the public.

The continual wars of the Caledonians against the Romans, hindered the nobility from initiating themselves, as the custom formerly was, into the order of the druids. The precepts of their religion were confined to a few, and were not much attended to by a people inured to war. The Vergobretus, or chief magistrate, was chosen without the concurrence of the hierarchy, or continued in his office against their will. Continual power strengthened his interest among the tribes, and enabled him to send down, as hereditary to his posterity, the office he had only received himself by election.

On the occasion of a new war against the King of the World, as the poems emphatically call the Roman emperor, the druids, to vindicate the honour of the order, began to resume their ancient privilege of chusing the Vergobretus. Garmal, the son of Tarno, being deputed by them, came to the grandfather of the celebrated Fingal, who was then Vergobretus, and commanded him, in the name of the whole order, to lay down his office. Upon his refusal, a civil war commenced, which soon ended in almost the total extinction of the religious order of the druids. A few that remained, retired to the dark recesses of their groves, and the caves they had formerly used for their meditations. It is then we find them in the 'circle of stones,' and unheeded by the world. A total disregard for the order, and utter abhorrence of the druidical rites, ensued. Under this cloud of public hate, all that any knowledge of the religion of the druids became extinct, and the nation fell

a Fergabreth, 'the man to judge.'

into the last degree of ignorance of their rites and ceremonies.

It is no matter of wonder then, that Fingal, and his son Ossian, made so little, if any mention of the druids, who were the declared enemies to their succession in the supreme magistracy. It is a singular case, it must be allowed, that there are no traces of religion in the Poems ascribed to Ossian; as the poetical compositions of other nations are so closely connected with their mythology. It is hard to account for it to those who are not made acquainted with the manners of the old Scottish bards. That race of men carried their notions of martial honour to an extravagant pitch. Any aid given their heroes in battle, was thought to derogate from their fame; and the bards immediately transferred the glory of the action to him who gave that aid.

Had Ossian brought down gods, as often as Homer hath done, to assist his heroes, this poem had not consisted of eulogiums on his friends, but of hymns to these superior beings. To this day, those that write in the Gaelic language seldom mention religion in their profane poetry; and when they professedly write of religion, they never interlard their compositions with the actions of their heroes. This custom alone, even though the religion of the druids had not been previously extinguished, may, in some measure, account for Ossian's silence concerning the religion of his own times.

To say that a nation is void of all religion, is the same thing as to say, that it does not consist of people endued with reason. The traditions of their fathers, and their own observations on the works of nature, together with that superstition which is inherent in the human frame, have, in all ages, raised in the minds of men some idea of a superior being. Hence it is, that in the darkest times, and amongst the most barbarous nations, the very populace themselves had some faint notion, at least, of a divinity. It would be doing injustice to Ossian, who, upon no occasion, shews a narrow mind, to think that he had not opened his conceptions to that primitive and greatest of all truths. But let Ossian's

religion be what it will, it is certain he had no knowledge of Christianity, as there is not the least allusion to it, or any of its rites, in his poems; which absolutely fixes him to an era prior to the introduction of that religion. The persecution begun by Dioclesian in the year 303, is the most probable time in which the first dawning of Christianity in the north of Britain can be fixed. The humane and mild character of Constantius Chloris, who commanded them in Britain, induced the persecuted Christians to take refuge under him. Some of them, through a zeal to propagate their tenets, or through fear, went beyond the pale of the Roman empire, and settled among the Caledonians; who were the more ready to hearken to their doctrines, as the religion of the druids had been exploded so long before.

These missionaries, either through choice, or to give more weight to the doctrine they advanced, took possession of the cells and groves of the druids; and it was from this retired life they had the name of Culdees [a], which in the language of the country signified sequestered persons. It was with one of the Culdees, that Ossian, in his extreme old age, is said to have disputed concerning the Christian religion. This dispute is still extant, and is couched in verse, according to the custom of the times. The extreme ignorance on the part of Ossian of the Christian tenets, shews that that religion had only been lately introduced, as it is not easy to conceive, how one of the first rank could be totally unacquainted with a religion that had been known for any time in the country. The dispute bears the genuine mark of antiquity. The obselete phrases and expressions peculiar to the times, prove it to be no forgery. If Ossian then lived at the introduction of Christianity, as by all appearance he did, his epoch will be the latter end of the third, and the beginning of the fourth century. What puts this point beyond dispute, is the allusion in his poems to the history of the times.

The exploits of Fingal against Caracul [b], the son of the King of the World, are among the first brave actions

a Culdith. b Carac'huil, 'terrible eye.' Carac'healla, 'terrible look.' Carac'challin, 'a sort of upper garment.'

of his youth. A complete Poem, which relates to this subject, is printed in this collection.

In the year 210 the Emperor Severus, after returning from his expedition against the Caledonians, at York, fell into the tedious illness of which he afterwards died. The Caledonians and Maiatæ, resuming courage from his indisposition, took arms in order to recover the possessions they had lost. The enraged emperor commanded his army to march into their country, and to destroy it with fire and sword. His orders were but ill executed, for his son Caracalla was at the head of the army, and his thoughts were entirely taken up with the hopes of his father's death, and with schemes to supplant his brother Geta. He scarcely had entered the enemy's country, when news was brought him that Severus was dead. A sudden peace was patched up with the Caledonians, and, as it appears from Dion Cassius, the country they had lost to Severus was restored to them.

The Caracul of Fingal is no other than Caracalla, who, as the son of Severus, the emperor of Rome, whose dominions were extended over almost the known world, was not without reason called, in the Poems of Ossian, the Son of the King of the World. The space of time between 211, the year Severus died, and the beginning of the fourth century, is not so great, but Ossian, the son of Fingal, might have seen the Christians whom the persecution under Dioclesian had driven beyond the pale of the Roman empire.

Ossian, in one of his many lamentations on the death of his beloved son Oscar, mentions, among his great actions, a battle which he fought against Caros, king of ships, on the banks of the winding Carun.[a] It is more than probable, that the Caros mentioned here is the same with the noted usurper, Carausius, who assumed the purple in the year 287, and, seizing on Britain, defeated the emperor Maximinian Herculius, in in several naval engagements, which gives propriety to his being called, in Ossian's Poems, the King of Ships.

a Car-ravon, 'winding river.'

The winding Carun is that small river, retaining still the name of Carron, and runs in the neighbourhood of Agricola's wall, which Carausius repaired to obstruct the incursions of the Caledonians. Several other passages in the poems allude to the wars of the Romans; but the two just mentioned clearly fix the epoch of Fingal to the third century; and this account agrees exactly with the Irish histories, which place the death of Fingal, the son of Comhal, in the year 283, and that of Oscar and their own celebrated Cairbar, in the year 296.

Some people may imagine, that the allusions to the Roman history might have been industriously inserted into the poems, to give them the appearance of antiquity. This fraud must then have been committed at least three ages ago, as the passages in which the allusions are made, are alluded to often in the compositions of those times.

Every one knows what a cloud of ignorance and barbarism overspread the north of Europe three hundred years ago. The minds of men, addicted to superstition, contracted a narrowness that destroyed genius. Accordingly we find the compositions of those times trivial and puerile to the last degree. But let it be allowed, that, amidst all the untoward circumstances of the age, a genius might arise,—it is not easy to determine what could induce him to give the honour of his compositions to an age so remote. We find no fact that he has advanced to favour any designs which could be entertained by any man who lived in the fifteenth century. But should we suppose a poet, thro' humour, or for reasons which cannot be seen at this distance of time, would ascribe his own compositions to Ossian, it is next to impossible, that he could impose upon his countrymen, when all of them were so well acquainted with the traditional Poems of their ancestors.

The strongest objection to the authenticity of the Poems now given to the public under the name of Ossian, is the improbability of their being handed down by tradition through so many centuries. Ages of barbarism, some will say, could not produce poems abound-

ng with the disinterested and generous sentiments so conspicuous in the compositions of Ossian: and could these ages produce them, it is impossible but they must be lost, or altogether corrupted, in a long succession of barbarous generations.

These objections naturally suggest themselves to men unacquainted with the ancient state of the northern parts of Britain. The bards, who were an inferior order of the druids, did not share their bad fortune. They were spared by the victorious king, as it was through their means only he could hope for immortality to his fame. They attended him in the camp, and contributed to establish his power by their songs. His great actions were magnified, and the populace, who had not ability to examine into his character narrowly, were dazzled with his fame in the rhymes of the bards. In the mean time, men assumed the sentiments that are rarely to be met with in an age of barbarism. The bards, who were originally the disciples of the druids, had their minds opened, and their ideas enlarged, by being initiated in the learning of that celebrated order. They could form a perfect hero in their own minds, and ascribe that character to their prince. The inferior chiefs made this ideal character the model of their conduct, and by degrees brought their minds to that generous spirit which breathes in all the poetry of the times. The prince, flattered by his bards, and rivalled by his own heroes, who imitated his character as described in the eulogies of his poets, endeavoured to excel his people in merit, as he was above them in station. This emulation continuing, formed at last the general character of the nation, happily compounded of what is noble in barbarity, and virtuous and generous in a polished people.

When virtue in peace, and bravery in war, are the characteristics of a nation, their actions become interesting, and their fame worthy of immortality. A generous spirit is warmed with noble actions, and becomes ambitious of perpetuating them. This is the true source of that divine inspiration, to which the poets of all ages

pretended. When they found their themes inadequate to the warmth of their imaginations, they varnished them over with fables, supplied by their own fancy, or furnished by absurd traditions. These fables, howeve ridiculous, had their abettors; posterity either implicitly believed them, or through a vanity natural to mankind, pretended that they did. They loved to place the founders of their families in the days of fable, when poetry, without the fear of contradiction, could give what characters she pleased of her heroes. It is to this vanity that we owe the preservation of what remain of the works of Ossian. His poetical merit made his heroes famous, in a country where heroism was most esteemed and admired. The posterity of these heroes, or those who pretended to be descended from them, heard with pleasure the eulogiums of their ancestors; bards were employed to repeat the poems, and to record the connection of their patrons with chiefs so renowned. Every chief in process of time had a bard in his family, and the office became at last hereditary. By the sucession of these bards, the poems concerning the ancestors of the family were handed down from generation to generation; they were repeated to the whole clan on solemn occasions, and always alluded to in the new compositions of the bards. This custom came down near to our own times; and after the bards were discontinued, a great number in a clan retained by memory, or committed to writing, their compositions, and founded the antiquity of their families on the authority of their poems.

The use of letters was not known in the north of Europe till long after the institution of the bards; the records of the families of their pations, their own, and more ancient poems, were handed down by tradition. Their poetical compositions were admirably contrived for that purpose. They were adapted to music; and the most perfect harmony observed. Each verse was so connected with those which preceded or followed it, that if one line had been remembered in a stanza, it was almost impossible to forget the rest. The cadences

followed in so natural a gradation, and the words were so adapted to the common turn of the voice, after it is raised to a certain key, that it was almost impossible, from a similarity of sound, to substitute one word for another. This excellence is peculiar to the Celtic tongue, and is perhaps to be met with in no other language. Nor does this choice of words clog the sense, or weaken the expression. The numerous flexions of consonants, and variation in declension, make the language very copious.

The descendants of the Celtæ, who inhabited Britain and its isles, were not singular in this method of preserving the most precious monuments of their nation. The ancient laws of the Greeks were couched in verse, and handed down by tradition. The Spartans, through a long habit, became so fond of the custom, that they would never allow their laws to be committed to writing. The actions of great men, and the eulogiums of kings and heroes, were preserved in the same manner. All the historical monuments of the old Germans were comprehended in their ancient songs [m]; which were either hymns to their gods, or elegies in praise of their heroes, and were intended to perpetuate the great events in their nations which were carefully interwoven with them. This species of composition was not committed to writing, but delivered by oral tradition [n]. The care they took to have the poems taught to their children, the uninterrupted custom of repeating them upon certain occasions, and the happy measure of the verse, served to preserve them for a long time uncorrupted. This oral chronicle of the Germans was not forgot in the eighth century, and it probably would have remained to this day, had not learning, which thinks every thing that is not committed to writing fabulous, been introduced. It was from poetical traditions that Garcillasso composed his account of the Yncas of Peru. The Peruvians had lost all other monuments of their history; and it was from ancient poems which his mother, a princess of the blood of the Yncas, taught

m Tacitus de mor. Germ. n Abbe de la Bleterie Remarques sur la Germaine.

him in his youth, that he collected the materials of his history. If other nations then, that had been often over-run by enemies, and had sent abroad and received colonies, could for many ages preserve, by oral tradition, their laws and histories uncorrupted, it is much more probable that the ancient Scots, a people so free of intermixture with foreigners, and so strongly attached to the memory of their ancestors, had the works of their bards handed down with great purity.

It will seem strange to some, that poems admired for many centuries in one part of this kingdom should be hitherto unknown in the other; and that the British, who have carefully traced out the works of genius in other nations, should so long remain strangers to their own. This, in a great measure, is to be imputed to those who understood both languages and never attempted a translation. They, from being acquainted but with detached pieces, or from a modesty which, perhaps, the present translator ought in prudence to have followed, despaired of making the compositions of their bards agreeable to an English reader. The manner of those compositions is so different from other poems, and the ideas so confined to the most early state of society, that it was thought they had not enough of variety to please a polished age.

This was long the opinion of the translator of the following collection; and though he admired the poems in the original very early, and gathered part of them from tradition for his own amusement, yet he never had the smallest hopes of seeing them in an English dress. He was sensible that the strength and manner of both languages were very different, and that it was next to impossible to translate the Gaelic poetry in any thing of tolerable English verse; a prose translation he could never think of, as it must necessarily fall short of the majesty of an original. It was a gentleman, who has himself made a figure in the poetical world, that gave him the first hint concerning a literal prose translation. He tried it at his desire, and the specimen was approved. Other gentlemen were earnest in exorting him to bring more to the light, and it

is to their uncommon zeal that the world owes the Gaelic Poems, if they have any merit.

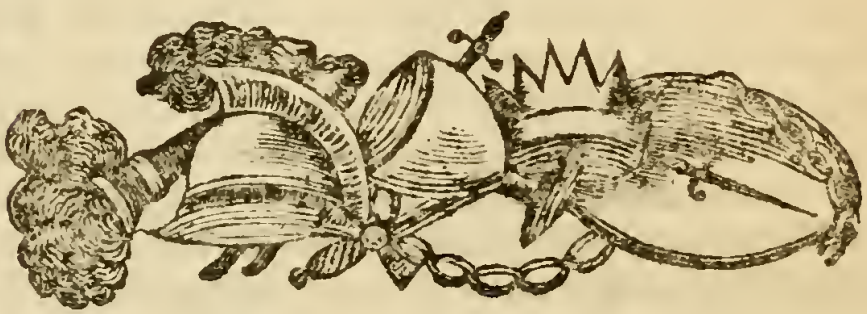
It was at first intended to make a general collection of all the ancient pieces of genius to be found in the Gaelic language; but the translator had his reasons for confining himself to the remains of the works of Ossian. The action of the poem that stands the first was not the greatest or most celebrated of the exploits of Fingal. His wars were very numerous, and each of them afforded a theme which employed the genius of his son. But, excepting the present poems, those pieces are irrecoverably lost, and there only remain a few fragments in the hands of the translator. Tradition has still preserved, in many places, the story of the poems, and many now living have heard them in their youth repeated.

The complete work now printed, would, in a short time, have shared the fate of the rest. The genius of the Highlanders has suffered a great change within these few years. The communication with the rest of the island is open, and the introduction of trade and manufactures has distroyed that leisure which was formerly dedicated to hearing and repeating the poems of ancient times. Many have now learned to leave their mountains, and seek their fortunes in a milder climate; and though a certain *amor patriæ* may sometimes bring them back, they have, during their absence, imbibed enough of foreign manners to dispise the customs of their ancestors. Bards have been long disused, and the spirit of genealogy has greatly subsided. Men begin to be less devoted to their chiefs, and consanguinity is not so much regarded. When property is established, the human mind confines its views to the pleasure it procures. It does not go back to antiquity, or look forward to succeeding ages. The cares of life increase, and the actions of other times no longer amuse. Hence it is, that the taste for ancient poetry is at a low ebb among the Highlanders. They have not, however, thrown off the good qualities of their ancestors. Hospitality still subsists, and an uncommon civility

to strangers. Friendship is inviolable, and revenge less blindly followed than formerly.

To say any thing concerning the poetical merit of the poems, would be an inticipation of the judgment of the public. The poem which stands first in the collection is truly epic. The characters are strongly marked, and the sentiments breathe heroism. The subject of it is an invasion of Ireland by Swaran king of Lochlin, which is the name of Scandinavia in the Gaelic language. Cuthullin, general of the Irish tribes, in the minority of Cormic king of Ireland, upon intelligence of the invasion, assembled his forces near Tura, a castle on the coast of Ulster. The poem opens with the landing of Swaran; councils are held, battles fought, and Cuthullin is at last totally defeated. In the mean time, Fingal, king of Scotland, whose aid was solicited before the enemy landed, arrived and expelled them from the country. This war, which continued but six days and as many nights, is, including the episodes, the whole story of the poem. The scene is the heath of Lena, near a mountain called Cromleach, in Ulster.

All that can be said of the translation is, that it is literal, and that simplicity is studied. The arrangement of the words in the original is imitated, and the inversions of the style observed. As the translator claims no merit from his version, he hopes for the indulgence of the public where he fails. He wishes that the imperfect semblance he draws, may not prejudise the world against an original, which contains what is beautiful in simplicity, and grand in the sublime.



A DISSERTATION CONCERNING THE POEMS OF OSSIAN.

THE history of those nations which originally possessed the north of Europe, is little known. Destitute of the use of letters, they themselves had not the means of transmitting their great actions to remote posterity. Foreign writers saw them only at a distance, and therefore their accounts are partial and indistinct. The vanity of the Romans induced them to consider the nations beyond the pale of their empire as barbarians; and, consequently, their history unworthy of being investigated. Some men, otherwise of great merit among ourselves, give into this confined opinion. Having early imbibed their idea of exalted manners from the Greek and Roman writers, they scarcely ever afterwards have the fortitude to allow any dignity of character to any other ancient people.

Withour derogating from the fame of Greece and Rome, we may consider antiquity beyond the pale of their empire worthy of some attention. The nobler passions of the mind never shoot forth more free and unrestrained than in these times we call barbarous. That irregular manner of life, and those manly pursuits from which barbarity takes its name, are highly favourable to a strength of mind unknown in polished times. In advanced society the characters of men are more uniform and disguised. The human passions lie, in some degree, concealed behind forms and artificial manners; and the powers of the soul, without an opportunity of exerting them, lose their vigour. The times of regular government and polished manners are therefore to be wished for by the feeble and weak in mind. An unsettled state, and those convulsions which attend it, is the proper field for an exalted cha-

racter, and the exertion of great parts. Merit there rises always superior; no fortuitous event can raise the timid and mean into power. To those who look upon antiquity in this light, it is an agreeable prospect; and they alone can have real pleasure in tracing nations to their source.

The establishment of the Celtic states in the north of Europe, is beyond the reach of their written annals. The traditions and songs to which they trusted their history, were lost, or altogether corrupted in their revolutions and migrations, which were so frequent and universal, that no kingdom in Europe is now possessed by its original inhabitants. Societies were formed, and kingdoms erected, from a mixture of nations, who, in process of time, lost all knowledge of their own origin.

If tradition could be depended upon, it is only among a people, from all time free of intermixture with foreigners. We are to look for these among the mountains and inaccessible parts of a country; places, on account of their barrenness, uninviting to an enemy, or whose natural strength enabled the natives to repel invasions. Such are the inhabitants of the mountains of Scotland. We accordingly find, that they differ materially from those who possess the low and more fertile part of the kingdom. Their language is pure and original, and their manners are those of an ancient and unmixed race of men. Conscious of their own antiquity, they long dispised others, as a new and mixed people. As they lived in a country only fit for pasture, they were free of that toil and business which engross the attention of a commercial people. Their amusement consisted in hearing or repeating their songs and traditions, and these entirely turned on the antiquity of their nation, and the exploits of their forefathers. It is no wonder, therefore, that there are more remains of antiquity among them, than among any other people in Europe. Traditions, however, concerning remote periods, are only to be regarded,

in so far as they coincide with cotemporary writers of undoubted credit and veracity.

No writers began their accounts from a more early period than the historians of the Scots nation. Without records, or even tradition itself, they give a long list of ancient kings, and a detail of their transactions, with a scrupulous exactness. One might naturally suppose, that when they had no authentic annals, they should, at least, have recourse to the traditions of their country, and have reduced them into a regular system of history. Of both they seem to have been equally destitute. Born in the low country, and strangers to the ancient language of their nation, they contented themselves with copying from one another, and retailing the same fictions in a new colour and dress.

John Fordun was the first who collected those fragments of the Scots history, which had escaped the brutal policy of Edward I. and reduced them into order. His accounts, in so far as they concerned recent transactions, deserved credit: beyond a certain period, they were fabulous and unsatisfactory. Some time before Fordun wrote, the king of England, in a letter to the Pope, had run up the antiquity of his nation to a very remote era. Fordun, possessed of all the national prejudice of the age, was unwilling that his country should yield, in point of antiquity, to a people then its rivals and enemies. Distitute of annals in Scotland, he had recourse to Ireland, which, according to the vulgar errors of the times, was reckoned the first habitation of the Scots. He found there, that the Irish bards had carried their pretensions to antiquity as high, if not beyond, any nation in Europe. It was from them he took those improbable fictions which form the first part of his history.

The writers that succeeded Fordun implicitly followed his system, though they sometimes varied from him in their relations of particular transactions, and the order of succession of their kings. As they had no new lights, and were, equally with him, unacquainted with the traditions of their country, their histories con-

tain little information concerning the origin of the Scots. Even Buchanan himself, except the elegance and vigour of his style, has very little to recommend him. Blinded with political prejudices, he seemed more anxious to turn the fictions of his predecessors to his own purposes, than to detect their misrepresentations, or investigate truth amidst the darkness which they had thrown round it. It therefore appears, that little can be collected from their own historians, concerning the first migration of the Scots into Britain.

That this island was peopled from Gaul admits of no doubt. Whether colonies came forward from the north of Europe is a matter of mere speculation. When South Britain yielded to the power of the Romans, the unconquered nations to the north of the province were distinguished by the name of Caledonians. From their very name, it appears that they were of those Gauls who possessed themselves originally of Britain. It is compounded of two Celtic words, Cael signifying Celts, or Gauls, and Dun, or Don, a hill; so that Cael-don, or Caledonians, is as much as to say, the Celts of the hill country. The Highlanders to this day call themselves Cael, their language Gaelic or Galic, and their country Caeldoch, which the Romans softened into Caledonia. This of itself is sufficient to demonstrate, that they are the genuine descendants of the ancient Caledonians, and not a pretended colony of Scots, who settled first in the north, in the third or fourth century.

From the double meaning of the word Cael, which signifies strangers, as well as Gauls, or Celts, some have imagined, that the ancestors of the Caledonians were of a different race from the rest of the Britons, and that they received their name upon that account. This opinion, say they, is supported by Tacitus, who, from several circumstances, concludes that the Caledonians were of German extraction. A discussion of a point so intricate, at this distance of time, could neither be satisfactory nor important.

Towards the latter end of the third, and beginning

of the fourth century, we meet with the Scots in the north. Porphyrius [a] makes the first mention of them about that time. As the Scots were not heard of before that period, most writers supposed them to have been a colony newly come to Britain, and that the Picts were the only genuine descendants of the ancient Caledonians. This mistake is easily removed. The Caledonians, in process of time, became naturally divided into two distinct nations, as possessing parts of the country, entirely different in their nature and soil. The western coast of Scotland is hilly and barren; towards the east, the country is plain, and fit for tillage. The inhabitants of the mountains, a roving and uncontrouled race of men, lived by feeding of cattle, and what they had killed in hunting. Their employment did not fix them to one place. They removed from one heath to another, as suited best with their convenience or inclination. They were not therefore improperly called, by their neighbours, SCUITE, or the wandering nation; which is evidently the origin of the Roman name of *Scoti*.

On the other hand, the Caledonians, who possessed the east coast of Scotland, as the division of the country was plain and fertile, applied themselves to agriculture and raising of corn. It was from this, that the Gaelic name of the Picts proceeded; for they are called, in that language, Cruithnich, *i. e.* the wheat or corn-eaters. As the Picts lived in a country so different in its nature from that possessed by the Scots, so their national character suffered a material change. Unobstructed by mountains or lakes, their communication with one another was free and frequent. Society, therefore, became sooner established among them than among the Scots, and consequently they were much sooner governed by civil magistrates and laws. This, at last, produced so great a difference in the manners of the two nations, that they began to forget their common origin, and almost continual quarrels and animosities subsisted between them. These animosities, after

[a] St Hieron, ad Ctesiphon.

some ages, ended in the subversion of the Pictish kingdom, but not in the total extirpation of the nation; according to the most of the Scots writers, who seemed to think it more for the honour of their countrymen to annihilate than reduce a rival people under their obedience. It is certain, however, that the very name of Picts was lost, and those that remained were so completely incorporated with their conquerors, that they soon lost all memory of their own origin.

The end of the Pictish government is placed so near that period to which authentic annals reach, that it is matter of wonder, that we have no monuments of their language or history remaining. This favours the system I have laid down. Had they originally been of a different race from the Scots, their language of course would be different. The contrary is the case. The names of places in the Pictish dominions, and the very names of their kings, which are handed down to us, are of Gaelic original; which is a convincing proof that the two nations were of old one and the same, and only divided into two governments, by the effect which their situation had upon the genius of the people.

The name of Picts was perhaps given by the Romans to the Caledonians who possessed the east coast of Scotland, from their painting their bodies. This circumstance made some imagine that the Picts were of British extract, and a different race of men from the Scots. That more of the Britons who fled northward from the tyranny of the Romans, settled in the low country of Scotland than among the Scots of the mountains, may be easily imagined from the very nature of the country. It was they who introduced painting among the Picts. From this circumstance proceeded the name of the latter to distinguish them from the Scots, who never had that art among them, and from the Britons, who discontinued it after the Roman conquest.

The Caledonians most certainly acquired a considerable knowledge in navigation, by their living on a coast intersected with many arms of the sea, and in islands divided one from another by wide and dangerous friths

It is therefore highly probable, that they very early found their way to the north of Ireland, which is within sight of their own country. That Ireland was first peopled from Britain is certain. The vicinity of the two islands, the exact correspondence of the ancient inhabitants of both, in point of manners and language, are sufficient proofs, even if we had not the testimony of authors of undoubted veracity [b] to confirm it. The abettors of the most romantic systems of Irish antiquities allow it; but they place the colony from Britain at an improbable and remote era. I shall easily admit that the colony of the Firbolg, confessedly the Belgæ of Britain, settled in the south of Ireland, before the Cael, or Caledonians, discovered the north: but it is not at all likely, that the migration of the Firbolg to Ireland, happened many centuries before the Christian era.

Ossian, in the poem of Temora, [Book II.] throws considerable light on this subject. His accounts agree so well with what the ancients have delivered, concerning the first population and inhabitants of Ireland, that every unbiassed person will confess them more probable than the legends handed down by tradition in that country. From him it appears, that in the days of Trathal, grandfather to Fingal, Ireland was possessed by two nations; the Firbolg, or Belgæ of Britain, who inhabited the south, and the Cael, who passed over from Caledonia and the Hebrides to Ulster. The two nations, as is usual among an unpolished and lately settled people, were divided into small dynasties, subject to petty kings, or chiefs, independent of one another. In this situation, it is probable, they continued long, without any material revolution in the state of the island, until Crothar, lord of Atha, a country in Connaught, the most potent chief of the Firbolg, carried away Conlama, the daughter of Cathmin, a chief of the Cael, who possessed Ulster.

Conlama had been betrothed, some time before, to Turloch, a chief of their own nation. Turloch resented the affront offered him by Crothar, made an irrup-

[b] Diod. Sic. l. 5.

tion into Connaught, and killed Cormul, the brother of Crothar, who came to oppose his progress. Crothar himself then took to arms, and either killed or expelled Turloch. The war upon this became general between the two nations: and the Cael were reduced to the last extremity. In this situation they applied for aid to Trathal, king of Morven, who sent his brother Conar, already famous for his great exploits, to their relief. Conar, upon his arrival in Ulster, was chosen king, by the unanimous consent of the Caledonian tribes, who possessed that country. The war was renewed with great vigour and success; but the Firbolg appear to have been rather repelled than subdued. In succeeding reigns, we learn from episodes in the same poem, that the chiefs of Atha made several efforts to become monarchs of Ireland, and to expel the race of Conar.

To Conar succeeded his son Cormac, [Book III.] who appears to have reigned long. In his latter days he seemed to have been driven to the last extremity, by an incursion of the Firbolg, who supported the pretensions of the chiefs of Atha to the Irish throne. Fingal, who then was very young, came to the aid of Cormac, totally defeated Colc-ulla, chief of Atha, and re-established Cormac in the sole possession of all Ireland. [Book IV.] It was then he fell in love with, and took to wife, Ros-crana, the daughter of Cormac, who was the mother of Ossian.

Cormac was succeeded in the Irish throne by his son Cairbar; Cairbar, by Artho his son, who was the father of that Cormac, in whose minority the invasion of Swaran happened, which is the subject of the poem of Fingal. The family of Atha, who had not relinquished their pretensions to the Irish throne, rebelled in the minority of Cormac, defeated his adherents, and murdered him in the palace of Temora. [Book I.] Cairbar, Lord of Atha, upon this, mounted the throne. His usurpation soon ended with his life; for Fingal made an expedition into Ireland, and restored, after various vicissitudes of fortune, the family of Conar to the possession of the kingdom. This war is the subject of Temora; the e-

vents, though certainly heightened and embellished by poetry, seem, notwithstanding, to have their foundation in true history.

Ossian has not only preserved the history of the first migrations of the Caledonians into Ireland, but has also delivered some important facts concerning the first settlement of the Firbolg, or Belgæ of Britain, in that kingdom, under their leader Larthon, who was ancestor to Cairbar and Cathmor, who successively mounted the Irish throne, after the death of Cormac, the son of Artho. I forbear to transcribe the passage on account of its length. [Book VII.] It is the song of Fonar, the bard, towards the latter end of the seventh book of Temora. As the generations from Larthon to Cathmor, to whom the episode is addressed, are not marked, as are those of the family of Conar, the first king of Ireland, we can form no judgment of the time of the settlement of the Firbolg. It is, however, probable, it was some time before the Cael, or Caledonians, settled in Ulster. One important fact may be gathered from the history of Ossian, that the Irish had no king before the latter end of the first century. Fingal lived, it is certain, in the third century; so Conar, the first monarch of the Irish, who was his grand-uncle, cannot be placed farther back than the close of the first. The establishing of this fact lays at once aside the pretended antiquities of the Scots and Irish, and cuts off the long list of kings which the latter give us for a millenium before.

Of the affairs of Scotland, it is certain, nothing can be depended upon prior to the reign of Fergus the son of Erc, who lived in the fifth century. The true history of Ireland begins somewhat later than that period. Sir James Ware[a], who was indefatigable in his researches after the antiquities of his country, rejects, as mere fiction and idle romance, all that is related of the ancient Irish, before the time of St Patrick and the reign of Leogaire. It is from this consideration, that he begins his history at the introduction of Christianity, remark-

[a] War. de Antiq. Hybern. præ. p. 1.

ing, that all that is delivered down concerning the times of Paganism were tales of late invention, strangely mixed with anachronisms and inconsistencies. Such being the opinion of Ware, who had collected, with uncommon industry and zeal, all the real and pretendedly ancient manuscripts concerning the history of his country, we may, on his authority, reject the improbable and self-condemned tales of Keating and O'Flaherty. Credulous and puerile to the last degree, they have disgraced the antiquities they meant to establish. It is to be wished, that some able Irishman, who understands the language and records of his country, may redeem, ere it be too late, the genuine antiquities of Ireland, from the hands of these idle fabulists.

By comparing the history preserved by Ossian with the legends of the Scots and Irish writers, and by afterwards examining both by the test of the Roman authors, it is easy to discover which is the most probable. Probability is all that can be established on the authority of tradition, ever dubious and uncertain. But when it favours the hypothesis laid down by cotemporary writers of undoubted veracity, and, as it were, finishes the figure of which they only drew the outlines, it ought, in the judgment of sober reason, to be preferred to accounts framed in dark and distant periods, with little judgment, and upon no authority.

Concerning the period of more than a century, which intervenes between Fingal and the reign of Fergus the son of Erc, or Arcath, tradition is dark and contradictory. Some trace up the family of Fergus to a son of Fingal of that name, who makes a considerable figure in Ossian's Poems. The three elder sons of Fingal, Ossian, Fillan, and Ryno, dying without issue, the succession of course devolved upon Fergus the fourth son, and his posterity. This Fergus, say some traditions, was the father of Congal, whose son was Arcath, the father of Fergus, properly called the first king of Scots, as it was in his time the Cael, who possessed the western coast of Scotland, began to be distinguished by foreigners by the name of Scots. From thenceforward, th

Scots and Picts, as distinct nations, became objects of attention to the historians of other countries. The internal state of the two Caledonian kingdoms has always continued, and ever must remain in obscurity and fable.

It is in this epoch we must fix the beginning of the decay of that species of heroism which subsisted in the days of Ossian. There are three stages in human society. The first is the result of consanguinity, and the natural affection of the members of a family for one another. The second begins, when property is established, and men enter into associations for mutual defence, against the invasions and injustice of neighbours. Mankind submit, in the third, to certain laws and subordinations of government, to which they trust the safety of their persons and property. As the first is formed on nature, so, of course, it is the most disinterested and noble. Men, in the last, have leisure to cultivate the mind, and to restore it, with reflection, to a primæval dignity of sentiment. The middle state is the region of complete barbarism and ignorance. About the beginning of the fifth century, the Scots and Picts were advanced into the second stage, and consequently into those circumscribed sentiments, which always distinguish barbarity. The events which soon after happened did not at all contribute to enlarge their ideas, or mend their national character.

About the year 426, the Romans, on account of domestic commotions, entirely forsook Britain, finding it impossible to defend so distant a frontier. The Picts and Scots, seizing this favourable opportunity, made incursions into the deserted province. The Britons, enervated by the slavery of several centuries, and those vices which are inseparable from an advanced state of civility, were not able to withstand the impetuous, though irregular, attacks of a barbarous enemy. In the utmost distress, they applied to their old masters the Romans, and (after the unfortunate state of the empire could not spare aid) to the Saxons, a nation equally barbarous and brave with the enemies of whom they were

so much afraid. Though the bravery of the Saxons repelled the Caledonian nations for a time, yet the latter found means to extend themselves considerably towards the south. It is, in this period, we must place the origin of the arts of civil life among the Scots. The seat of government was removed from the mountains to the plain and more fertile provinces of the south, to be near the common enemy, in case of sudden incursions.

Instead of roving through unfrequented wilds, in search of subsistence, by means of hunting, men applied to agriculture and raising of corn. This manner of life was the first means of changing the national character. The next thing which contributed to it was their mixture with strangers.

In the countries which the Scots had conquered from the Britons, it is probable the most of the old inhabitants remained. These incorporating with the conquerors, taught them agriculture, and other arts, which they themselves had received from the Romans. The Scots, however, in number as well as power, being the most predominant, retained still their language, and as many of the customs of their ancestors as suited with the nature of the country they possessed. Even the union of the two Caledonian kingdoms did not much affect the national character. Being originally descended from the same stock, the manners of the Picts and Scots were as similar as the different natures of the countries they possessed permitted.

What brought about a total change in the genius of the Scots nation was, their wars and other transactions with the Saxons. Several counties in the south of Scotland were alternately possessed by the two nations. They were ceded, in the ninth age, to the Scots; and it is probable, that most of the Saxon inhabitants remained in possession of their lands. During the several conquests and revolutions in England, many fled for refuge into Scotland, to avoid the oppression of foreigners, or the tyranny of domestic usurpers; in so much, that the Saxon race formed perhaps near one half of the Scottish kingdom. The Saxon manners and lan-

guage daily gained ground on the tongue and customs of the ancient Caledonians, till at last the latter were entirely relegated to inhabitants of the mountains, who were still unmixed with strangers.

It was after the accession of territory which the Scots received upon the retreat of the Romans from Britain, that the inhabitants of the Highlands were divided into clans. The king, when he kept his court in the mountains, was considered by the whole nation as the chief of their blood. Their small number, as well as the presence of their prince, prevented those divisions, which afterwards sprung forth into so many separate tribes. When the seat of government was removed to the south, those who remained in the Highlands were, of course, neglected. They naturally formed themselves into small societies, independent of one another. Each society had its own *regulus*, who either was, or in the succession of a few generations, regarded as chief of their blood. The nature of the country favoured an institution of this sort. A few valleys, divided from one another by extensive heaths and impassable mountains, form the face of the Highlands. In these vallies the chiefs fixed their residence. Round them, and almost within sight of their dwellings, were the habitations of their relations and dependents.

The seats of the Highland chiefs were neither disagreeable nor inconvenient. Surrounded with mountains and hanging woods, they were covered from the inclemency of the weather. Near them generally ran a pretty large river, which, discharging itself not far off, into an arm of the sea, or extensive lake, swarmed with variety of fish. The woods were stocked with wild-fowl; and the heaths and mountains behind them were the natural seat of the red-deer and roe. If we make allowance for the backward state of agriculture, the vallies were not unfertile; affording, if not all the conveniencies, at least the necessaries of life. Here the chief lived, the supreme judge and law-giver of his own people; but his sway was neither severe nor unjust. As the populace regarded him as the chief of their blood,

so he, in return, considered them as members of his family. His commands, therefore, though absolute and decisive, partook more of the authority of a father, than of the rigour of a judge. Though the whole territory of the tribe was considered as the property of the chief, yet his vassals made him no other consideration for his lands than services, neither burdensome nor frequent. As he seldom went from home, he was at no expence. His table was supplied by his own herds, and what his numerous attendants killed in hunting.

In this rural kind of magnificence the Highland chiefs lived for many ages. At a distance from the seat of government, and secured by the inaccessibleness of their country, they were free and independent. As they had little communication with strangers, the customs of their ancestors remained among them, and their language retained its original purity. Naturally fond of military fame, and remarkably attached to the memory of their ancestors, they delighted in traditions and songs, concerning the exploits of their nation, and especially of their own particular families. A succession of bards was retained in every clan, to hand down the memorable actions of their forefathers. As the era of Fingal, on account of Ossian's poems, was the most remarkable, and his chiefs the most renowned names in tradition, the bards took care to place one of them in the genealogy of every great family. The part of the poems which concerned the hero, who was regarded as ancestor, was preserved as an authentic record of the antiquity of the family, and was delivered down, from race to race, with wonderful exactness.

The bards themselves, in the mean time, were not idle. They erected their immediate patrons into heroes, and celebrated them in their songs. As the circle of their knowledge was narrow, their ideas were confined in proportion. A few happy expressions, and the manners they represent, may please those who understand the language; their obscurity and inaccuracy would disgust in a translation. It was chiefly for this reason, that I kept wholly to the compositions of Os-

sian, in my former and present publication. As he acted in a more extensive sphere, his ideas are more noble and universal; neither has he so many of those peculiarities, which are only understood in a certain period or country. The other bards have their beauties, but not in that species of composition in which Ossian excels. Their rhymes, only calculated to kindle a martial spirit among the vulgar, afford very little pleasure to genuine taste. This observation only regards their poems of the heroic kind; in every other species of poetry they are more successful. They express the tender melancholy of desponding love, with irresistible simplicity and nature. So well adapted are the sounds of the words to the sentiments, that, even without any knowledge of the language, they pierce and dissolve the heart. Successful love is expressed with peculiar tenderness and elegance. In all their compositions, except the heroic, which was solely calculated to animate the vulgar, they give us the genuine language of the heart, without any of those affected ornaments of phraseology, which, though intended to beautify sentiments, divest them of their natural force. The ideas, it is confessed, are too local to be admired in another language; to those who are acquainted with the manners they represent, and the scenes they describe, they must afford the highest pleasure and satisfaction.

It was the locality of his description and sentiment, that probably kept Ossian so long in the obscurity of an almost lost language. His ideas, though remarkably proper for the times in which he lived, are so contrary to the present advanced state of society, that more than a common mediocrity of taste is required to relish his poems as they deserve. Those who alone were capable to make a translation, were, no doubt, conscious of this, and chose rather to admire their poet in secret, than see him received with coldness in an English dress.

These were long my own sentiments, and accordingly my first translations from the Gaelic were

merely accidental. The publication which soon after followed, was so well received, that I was obliged to promise to my friends a larger collection. In a journey through the Highlands and isles, and, by the assistance of correspondents, since I left the country, all the genuine remains of the works of Ossian have come to my hands. In the preceding volume [d] complete poems were only given. Unfinished and imperfect poems were purposely omitted; even some pieces were rejected on account of their length, and others, that they might not break in upon that thread of connection which subsists in the lesser compositions subjoined to Fingal. That the comparative merit of pieces was not regarded in the selection, will readily appear to those who shall read attentively the present collection. It is animated with the same spirit of poetry, and the same strength of sentiment is sustained throughout.

The opening of the poem of Temora made its appearance in the first collection of Ossian's works. The second book, and several other episodes, have only fallen into my hands lately. The story of the poem, with which I had been long acquainted, enabled me to reduce the broken members of the piece into the order in which they now appear. For the ease of the reader, I have divided it into books, as I had done before with the poem of Fingal. As to the merit of the poem, I shall not anticipate the judgment of the public. My impartiality might be suspected, in my account of a work which, in some measure, is become my own. If the poem of Fingal met with the applause of persons of genuine taste, I shall also hope that Temora will not displease them.

But what renders Temora infinitely more valuable than Fingal, is the light it throws on the history of the times. The first population of Ireland, its first kings, and several circumstances which regard its connection of old with the south and north of Britain, are presented to us in several episodes. The subject and

d The author alludes to the poems preceding Berrathon, as that poem formerly ended the first volume.

catastrophe of the poem are founded upon facts, which regarded the first peopling of that country, and the contests between the two British nations which originally inhabited it. In a preceding part of this dissertation, I have shewn how superior the probability of Ossian's traditions is to the undigested fictions of the Irish bards, and the more recent and regular legends of both Irish and Scottish historians. I mean not to give offence to the abettors of the high antiquity of the two nations, though I have all along expressed my doubts concerning the veracity and abilities of those who deliver down their ancient history. For my own part, I prefer the national fame, arising from a few certain facts, to the legendary and uncertain annals of ages in remote and obscure antiquity. No kingdom now established in Europe can pretend to equal antiquity with that of the Scots, even according to my system; so that it is altogether needless to fix their origin a fictitious millenium before.

Since the publication of the poems contained in the first volume, many insinuations have been made, and doubts arisen concerning their authenticity. I shall, probably, hear more of the same kind after the present poems shall make their appearance. Whether these suspicions are suggested by prejudice, or are only the effects of ignorance of facts, I shall not pretend to determine. To me they give no concern, as I have it always in my power to remove them. An incredulity of this kind is natural to persons who confine all merit to their own age and country. These are generally the weakest, as well as the most ignorant, of the people. Indolently confined to a place, their ideas are narrow and circumscribed. It is ridiculous enough to see such people as these are, branding their ancestors with the despicable appellation of barbarians. Sober reason can easily discern where the title ought to be fixed with more propriety.

As prejudice is always the effect of ignorance, the knowing, the men of true taste, despise and dismiss it If the poetry is good, and the characters natural, and

striking. to them it is a matter of indifference, whether the heroes were born in the little village of Angles in Jutland, or natives of the barren heaths of Caledonia. That honour which nations derive from ancestors, worthy or renowned, is merely ideal. It may buoy up the minds of individuals, but it contributes very little to their importance in the eyes of others. But of all those prejudices which are incident to narrow minds, that which measures the merit of performances by the vulgar opinion concerning the country which produced them, is certainly the most ridiculous. Ridiculous, however, as it is, few have the courage to reject it; and I am thoroughly convinced, that a few quaint lines of a Roman or Greek epigrammatist, if dug out of the ruins of Herculaneum, would meet with more cordial and universal applause, than all the most beautiful and natural rhapsodies of all the Celtic bards and Scandinavian scalders that ever existed.

While some doubt the authenticity of the compositions of Ossian, others strenuously endeavour to appropriate them to the Irish nation. Though the whole tenor of the poems sufficiently contradicts so absurd an opinion, it may not be improper, for the satisfaction of some, to examine the narrow foundation on which this extraordinary claim it built.

Of all the nations descended from the ancient Celtæ, the Scots and Irish are the most similar in language, customs, and manners. This argues a more intimate connection between them, than a remote descent from the great Celtic stock. It is evident, in short, that at some one period or other, they formed one society, were subject to the same government, and were, in all respects, one and the same people. How they became divided, which the colony, or which the mother-nation, does not fall now to be discussed. The first circumstance that induced me to disregard the vulgarly-received opinion of the Hibernian extraction of the Scottish nation, was my observations on their ancient language. That dialect of the Celtic tongue spoken in the north of Scotland, is much more pure,

more agreeable to its mother-language, and more abounding with primitives, than that now spoken, or even that which has been writ for some centuries back, amongst the most unmixed part of the Irish nation. A Scotsman tolerably conversant in his own language, understands an Irish composition, from that derivative analogy which it has to the Gaelic of North Britain. An Irishman, on the other hand, without the aid of study, can never understand a composition in the Gaelic tongue. This affords a proof that the Scots Gaelic is the most original, and consequently the language of a more ancient and unmixed people. The Irish, however backward they may be to allow any thing to the prejudice of their antiquity, seem inadvertently to acknowledge it, by the very appellation they gave to the dialect they speak. They call their own language ' *Gaelic Eirinach*, i. e. *Caledonian Irish*, when, on the contrary, they call the dialect of North Britian, ' a Chaelic, ' or the Caledonian tongue, emphatically. A circumstance of this nature tends more to decide which is the most ancient nation, than the united testimony of a whole legion of ignorant bards and senachies, who perhaps never dreamed of bringing the Scots from Spain to Ireland, till some one of them, more learned than the rest, discovered, that the Romans called the first Iberia, and the latter Hibernia. On such a slight foundation were probably built those romantic fictions concerning the Milesians of Ireland.

From internal proofs it sufficiently appears, that the poems published under the name of Ossian, are not of Irish composition. The favourite chimera, that Ireland is the mother-country of the Scots, is totally subverted and ruined. The fictions concerning the antiquities of that country, which were forming for ages, and growing as they came down, on the hands of successive senachies and fileas, are found, at last, to be the spurious brood of modern and ignorant ages. To those who know how tenacious the Irish are of their pretended Iberian descent, this alone is proof sufficient, that poems so subversive of their system, could never be produced

by an Hibernian bard. But when we look to the language, it is so different from the Irish dialect, that it would be as ridiculous to think, that Milton's Paradise Lost could be wrote by a Scottish peasant, as to suppose that the Poems ascribed to Ossian were writ in Ireland.

The pretensions of Ireland to Ossian proceed from another quarter. There are handed down, in that country, traditional poems concerning the Fiona, or the heroes of Fion Mac Comnal. This Fion, say the Irish annalists, was general of the militia of Ireland, in the reign of Cormac, in the third century. Where Keating and O'Flaherty learned that Ireland had an embodied militia so early, is not easy for me to determine. Their information certainly did not come from the Irish poems concerning Fion. I have just now in my hands, all that remain of those compositions; but, unluckily for the antiquities of Ireland, they appear to be the work of a very modern period. Every stanza, nay almost every line, affords striking proofs that they cannot be three centuries old. Their allusions to the manners and customs of the fifteenth century are so many, that it is matter of wonder to me how any one could dream of their antiquity. They are entirely writ in that romantic taste which prevailed two ages ago. Giants, inchanted castles, dwarfs, palfreys, witches, and magicians, from the whole circle of the poet's invention. The celebrated Fion could scarcely move from one hillock to another, without encountering a giant, or being entangled in the circles of a magician. Witches, on broomsticks, were continually hovering round him like crows; and he had freed inchanted virgins in every valley in Ireland. In short, Fion, great as he was, passed a disagreeable life. Not only had he to engage all the mischiefs in his own country, foreign armies invaded him, assisted by magicians and witches, and headed by kings as tall as the main-mast of a first-rate. It must be owned, however, that Fion was not inferior to them in height.

A chos air Cromleach, druim-ard,
Chos cile air Crom-meal dubh,

Thoga Fion le lamh mhoir
An d'usgeo Lubhair na fruth.

With one foot on Cromleach his brow,
The other on Cromma! the dark,
Fion took up with his large hand
The water from Lubar of the streams.

Cromleach and Cromnal were two mountains in the neighbourhood of one another, in Ulster, and the river Lubar ran through the intermediate valley. The property of such a monster as this Fion, I should never have disputed with any nation. But the bard himself, in the poem from which the above quotation is taken, cedes him to Scotland.

Fion o Albin, fiol nan laoich.
Fion from Albion, race of heroes!

Were it allowable to contradict the authority of a bard, at this distance of time, I should have given as my opinion, that this enormous Fion was of the race of Hibernian giants, of Ruanus, or some other celebrated name, rather than a native of Caledonia, whose inhabitants, now at least, are not remarkable for their stature.

If Fion was so remarkable for his stature, his heroes had also other extraordinary properties. 'In weight all the sons of strangers' yielded to the celebrated Ton-iosal; and for hardness of skull, and, perhaps, for thickness too, the valiant Oscar stood 'unrivalled and alone.' Ossian himself had many singular and less delicate qualifications than playing on the harp; and the brave Cuchullin was of so diminutive a size, as to be taken for a child of two years of age, by the gigantic Swaran. To illustrate this subject, I shall here lay before the reader the history of some of the Irish poems concerning Fion Mac-Comnal. A translation of these pieces, if well executed, might afford satisfaction to the public. But this ought to be the work of a native of Ireland. To draw forth from obscurity, the poems of my own country, has afforded ample employment to me; besides, I am too diffident of my own abilities to undertake such a work. A

gentleman in Dublin accused me to the public of committing blunders and absurdities, in translating the language of my own country, and that before any translation of mine appeared [e]. How the gentleman came to see my blunders before I committed them, is not easy to determine, if he did not conclude that, as a Scotsman and of course descended of the Milesian race, I might have committed some of those oversights, which, perhaps very unjustly, are said to be peculiar to them.

From the whole tenor of the Irish poems concerning the Fiona, it appears, that Fion Mac-Comnal flourished in the reign of Cormac, which is placed by the universal consent of the senachies in the third century. They even fix the death of Fingal in the year 286, yet his son Ossian is made cotemporary with St Patrick, who preached the gospel, in Ireland, about the middle of the fifth age. Ossian, though at that time he must have been two hundred and fifty years of age, had a daughter young enough to become the wife to the saint. On account of this family connection, 'Patrick of the psalms,' for so the apostle of Ireland is emphatically called in the poems, took great delight in the company of Ossian, and in hearing the great actions of his family. The saint sometimes threw off the austerity of his profession, drank freely, and had his soul properly warmed with wine, in order to hear with becoming enthusiasm the poems of his father-in-law. One of the poems begins with this piece of useful information.

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[e] In Faukener's Dublin Journal, of the 1st December, 1761, appeared the following Advertisement:

"Speedily will be published, by a gentleman of this kingdom, who hath been for some time past employed in writing Historical Notes to

FINGAL: A POEM,

Originally wrote in the Irish or Erse language. In the preface to which, the translator who is a perfect master of the Irish tongue, will give an account of the manners and customs of the ancient Irish or Scots: and therefore, most humbly entreats the public to wait for his edition, which will appear in a short time, as he will set forth all the blunders and absurdities in the edition now printing in London, and shew the ignorance of the English translator in his knowledge of Irish grammer, not understanding any part of the accidence."

Lo don rabh Padric na mhur,
Gun Sailm air uidh, ach a gol,
Ghluais e thigh Ossian, mhic Fhion,
O san leis bhlnn ghloir.

The title of this poem is ' Teantach mor na Fiona.' It appears to have been founded on the same story with the Battle of Lora, one of the poems of the genuine Ossian. The circumstances and catastrophe in both are much the same; but the Irish Ossian discovers the age in which he lived, by an unlucky anachronism. After describing the total rout of Erragon, he very gravely concludes with this remarkable anecdote, " that none of the foe escaped, but a few who were " allowed to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy land." This circumstance fixes the date of the composition of the piece some centuries after the famous croisade; for it is evident, that the poet thought the time of the croisade so ancient, that he confounds it with the age of Fingal. Erragon, in the course of this poem, is often called:

Roigh Lochlin an du shloigh,
King of Denmark of two nations,

which alludes to the union of the kingdoms of Norway and Denmark, a circumstance which brings down the date of the piece to an era not far remote. Modern, however, as this pretended Ossian was, it is certain, he lived before the Irish had dreamed of appropriating Fion, or Fingal, to themselves. He concludes the poem with this reflection:

Na fagha se comhthrom nan n' arm,
Erragon Mac Annir nan lann glas
'San n'Albin ni n'abairtair Triath
Agus ghlaoite an n'Fhiona as.

" Had Erragon, son of Annir of gleaming swords, a- " voided the equal contest of arms, (single combat) no " chief should have afterwards been numbered in Albion, " and the heroes of Fion should no more be named."

The next poem that falls under our observation is ' Cath-cabhra,' or The Death of Oscar. This piece is founded on the same story which we have in the first

book of Temora. So little thought the author of Cath-cabhra of making Oscar his countryman, that in the course of two hundred lines, of which the poem consists, he puts the following expression thrice in the mouth of the hero:

Albion an sa d'roina m'arach.
Albion where I was born and bred.

The poem contains almost all the incidents in the first book of Temora. In one circumstance the bard differs materially from Ossian. Oscar, after he was mortally wounded by Cairbar, was carried by his people to a neighbouring hill, which commanded a prospect of the sea. A fleet appears at a distance, and the hero exclaims with joy,

Loingeas mo shean-athair at'an
'S iad a tiachd le cabhair chugain,
O Albin na n' ioma stuagh.

It is the fleet of my grandfather, coming with aid to our field, from Albion of many waves!" The testimony of this bard is sufficient to confute the idle fictions of Keating and O'Flaherty; for though he is far from being ancient, it is probable he flourished a full century before these historians. He appears, however, to have been a much better Christian than chronologer; for Fion, though he is placed two centuries before St Patrick, very devoutly recommends the soul of his grandson to his Redeemer.

'Duan a Gharibh Mac-Starn is another Irish poem in high repute. The grandeur of its images, and its propriety of sentiment, might have induced me to give a translation of it, had not I some expectations of seeing it in the collection of the Irish Ossian's poems, promised more than a year since to the public. The author descends sometimes from the region of the sublime to low and indecent description; the last of which, the Irish translator, no doubt, will choose to leave in the obscurity of the original. In this piece Cuthullin is used with very little ceremony, for he is often called the 'Dog of Tara,' in the county of Meath. This

severe title of the ‘ redoubtable Cuthullin,’ the most renowned of the Irish champions, proceeded from the poet’s ignorance of etymology. Cu, voice, or commander, signifies also a dog. The poet chose the last as the most noble appellation for his hero.

The subject of the poem is the same with that of the epic poem of Fingal. ‘ Garibh Mac-Starn’ is the same with Ossian’s Swaran, the son of Starno. His single combats with, and his victory over all the heroes of Ireland, excepting the ‘ celebrated dog of Tara,’ i. e. Cuthullin, afford matter for two hundred lines of tolerable poetry. Garibh’s progress in search of Cuthullin, and his intrigue with the gigantic Emir-bragal, that hero’s wife, enable the poet to extend his piece to four hundred lines. This author, it is true, makes Cuthullin a native of Ireland; the gigantic Emir-bragal he calls ‘ the guiding star of the women of Ireland.’ The property of this enormous lady I shall not dispute with him, or any other. But as he speaks with great tenderness of the ‘ daughters of the convent,’ and throws out some hints against the English nation, it is probable he lived in too modern a period to be intimately acquainted with the genealogy of Cuthullin.

Another Irish Ossian, for there were many, as appears from their difference in language and sentiment, speaks very dogmatically of Fion Mac-Comnal, as an Irishman. Little can be said for the judgment of this poet, and less for his delicacy of sentiment. The history of one of his episodes may, at once, stand as a specimen of his want of both. Ireland, in the days of Fion, happened to be threatened with an invasion, by three great potentates, the kings of Lochlin, Sweden, and France. It is needless to insist upon the impropriety of a French invasion of Ireland; it is sufficient for me to be faithful to the language of my author. Fion, upon receiving intelligence of the intended invasion, sent Ca-olt, Ossian, and Oscar, to watch the bay, in which it was apprehended the enemy was to land. Oscar was the worst choice of a scout that could

be made; for, brave as he was, he had the bad property of falling very often asleep on his post; nor was it possible to awake him, without cutting off one of his fingers, or dashing a large stone against his head. When the enemy appeared, Oscar, very unfortunately, was asleep. Ossian and Ca-olt consulted about the method of wakening him, and they at last fixed on the stone, as the less dangerous expedient.

Gun thog Caoilte a chlach, nach gan,
Agus a n' aighai' chiean gun bhuail;
'Tri mil an tulloch gun chri', &c.

"Ca-olt took up a heavy stone, and struck it against the hero's head. The hill shook for three miles, as the stone rebounded and rolled away." Oscar rose in wrath, and his father gravely desired him to spend his rage on his enemies, which he did to so good a purpose, that he singly routed a whole wing of their army. The confederate kings advanced notwithstanding, till they came to a narrow pass, possessed by the celebrated Ton-oisal. This name is very significant of the singular property of the hero who bore it. Ton-oisal, though brave, was so heavy and unweildy, that when he sat down, it took the whole force of an hundred men to set him upright on his feet again. Luckily for the preservation of Ireland, the hero happened to be standing when the enemy appeared; and he gave so good an account of them, that Fion upon his arrival found little to do, but to divide the spoil among his soldiers.

All these extraordinary heroes, Fion, Ossian, Oscar, and Ca-olt, says the poet, were

Siol Erin na gorm lann.
The sons of Erin of blue steel.

Neither shall I much dispute the matter with him: he has my consent also to appropriate to Ireland the celebrated Ton-oisal. I shall only say, that they are different persons from those of the same name in the Scottish poems; and that, though the stupendous valour of the first is so remarkable, they have not been equally lucky with the latter, in their poet. It is somewhat

extraordinary, that Fion, who lived some ages before St Patrick, swears like a very good Christian.

Air an Dia do chum gach case.
By God, who shaped every case.

It is worthy of being remarked, that in the line quoted, Ossian, who lived in St Patrick's days, seems to have understood something of the English, a language not then subsisting. A person more sanguine for the honour of his country than I am. might argue from this circumstance, that this pretendedly Irish Ossian was a native of Scotland; for my countrymen are universally allowed to have an exclusive right to the second-sight.

From the instances given, the reader may form a complete idea of the Irish compositions concerning the Fiona. The greatest part of them make the heroes of Fion,

Siol Albin a n'nioma caoile.
The race of Albion of many friths.

The rest make them natives of Ireland. But the truth is, that their authority is of little consequence on either side. From the instances I have given, they appear to have been the work of a very modern period. The pious ejaculations they contain, their allusions to the manners of the times, fix them to the fifteenth century. Had even the authors of these pieces avoided all allusions to their own times, it is impossible that the poems could pass for ancient, in the eyes of any person tolerably conversant with the Irish tongue. The idiom is so corrupted, and so many words borrowed from the English, that that language must have made considerable progress in Ireland before the poems were written.

It remains now to shew how the Irish bards began to appropriate Ossian and his heroes to their own country. After the English conquest, many of the natives of Ireland, averse to a foreign yoke, either actually were in a state of hostility with the conquerors, or at least paid little regard to their government. The Scots, in those ages, were often in open war, and never in cordial friendship with the English. The similarity of

manners and language, the traditions concerning their common origin, and above all, their having to do with the same enemy, created a free and friendly intercourse between the Scottish and Irish nations. As the custom of retaining bards and senachies was common to both; so each, no doubt, had formed a system of history, it matters not how much soever fabulous, concerning their respective origin. It was the natural policy of the times, to reconcile the traditions of both nations together, and, if possible, to deduce them from the same original stock.

The Saxon manners and language had, at that time, made great progress in the south of Scotland. The ancient language, and the traditional history of the nation, became confined entirely to the inhabitants of the Highlands, then fallen, from several concurring circumstances, into the last degree of ignorance and barbarism. The Irish, who, for some ages before the conquest, had possessed a competent share of that kind of learning which then prevailed in Europe, found it no difficult matter to impose their own fictions on the ignorant Highland senachies, by flattering the vanity of the Highlanders, with their long list of Heremonian kings and heroes, they without contradiction assumed to themselves the character of being the mother-nation of the Scots of Britain. At this time, certainly, was established that Hibernian system of the original of the Scots, which afterwards, for want of any other, was universally received. The Scots of the low country, who, by losing the language of their ancestors, lost, together with it, their national traditions, received implicitly the history of their country from Irish refugees, or from Highland senachies, persuaded over into the Hibernian system.

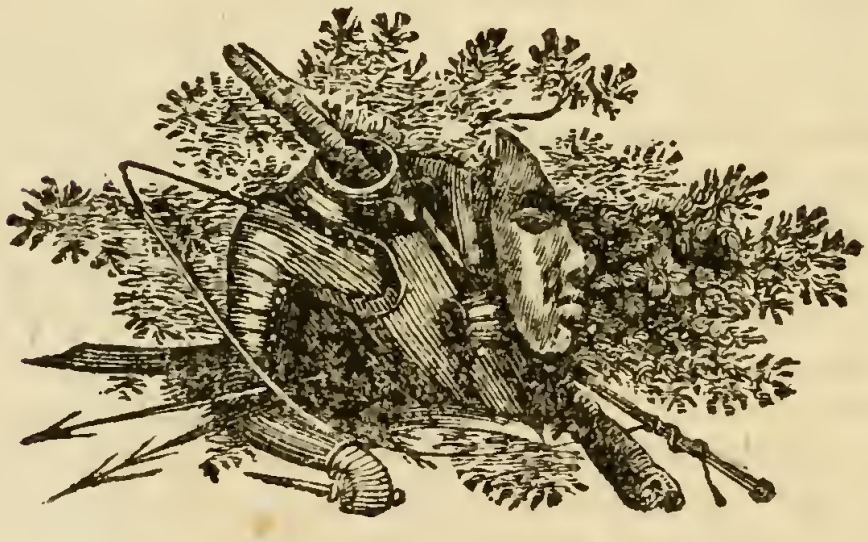
These circumstances are far from being ideal. We have remaining many particular traditions, which bear testimony to a fact of itself abundantly probable. What makes the matter incontestible is, that the ancient traditional accounts of the genuine origin of the Scots, have been handed down without interruption. Though

a few ignorant senachies might be persuaded out of their own opinion by the smoothness of an Irish tale, it was impossible to eradicate from among the bulk of the people their own national traditions. These traditions afterwards so much prevailed, that the Highlanders continue totally unacquainted with the pretended Hibernian extract of the Scottish nation. Ignorant chronicle writers, strangers to the ancient language of their country, preserved only from falling to the ground so improbable a story.

It was during the period I have mentioned, that the Irish became acquainted with, and carried into their country the compositions of Ossian. The scene of many of the pieces being in Ireland, suggested first to them a hint of making both heroes and poet natives of that island. In order to do this effectually, they found it necessary to reject the genuine poems, as every line was pregnant with proofs of their Scottish original, and to dress up a fable on the same subject in their own language. So ill qualified, however, were their bards to effectuate this change, that amidst all their desires to make the Fiona Irishmen, they every now and then called them 'Siol Albin.' It was probably, after a succession of some generations, that the bards had effrontery enough to establish an Irish genealogy for Fion, and deduce him from the Milesian race of kings. In some of the oldest Irish poems on the subject, the great-grand-father of Fion is made a Scandinavian; and his heroes are often called SIOL LOCHLIN NA BEUM, i. e. 'the race of Lochlin of wounds.' The only poem that runs up the family of Fion to Nuades Niveus, king of Ireland, is evidently not above a hundred and fifty years old; for, if I mistake not, it mentions the Earl of Tyrone, so famous in Elizabeth's time.

This subject, perhaps, is pursued further than it deserves; but a discussion of the pretensions of Ireland to Ossian, was become in some measure necessary. If the Irish poems concerning the Fiona should appear ridiculous, it is but justice to observe, that they are scarcely more so than the poems of other nations at

that period. On other subjects, the bards of Ireland have displayed a genius worthy of any age or nation. It was alone in matters of antiquity that they were monstrous in their fables. Their love-sonnets, and their elegies on the death of persons worthy or renowned, abound with such beautiful simplicity of sentiment, and wild harmony of numbers, that they become more than an atonement for their errors in every other species of poetry. But the beauty of these species depend so much on a certain 'curiosa felicitas' of expression in the original, that they must appear much to disadvantage in another language.



A

CRITICAL DISSERTATION

ON THE

POEMS OF OSSIAN,

THE

SON OF FINGAL.

BY HUGH BLAIR, D. D.

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A

CRITICAL DISSERTATION

ON THE

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THE

SON OF FINGAL.

AMONG the monuments remaining of the ancient state of nations, few are more valuable than their poems or songs. History, when it treats of remote and dark ages, is seldom very instructive. The beginnings of society, in every country, are involved in fabulous confusion; and though they were not, they would furnish few events worth recording. But, in every period of society, human manners are a curious spectacle; and the most natural pictures of ancient manners are exhibited in the ancient poems of nations. These present to us, what is much more valuable than the history of such transactions as a rude age can afford: the history of human imagination and passion. They make us acquainted with the notions and feelings of our fellow creatures in the most artless ages: discovering what objects they admired, and what pleasures they pursued, before those refinements of society had taken place, which enlarge indeed, and diversify the transaction, but disguise the manners of mankind.

Besides this merit which ancient poems have with philosophical observers of human nature, they have another with persons of taste. They promise some of the highest beauties of poetical writing. Irregular and unpolished we may expect the productions of uncultivated ages to be; but abounding, at the same time, with that enthusiasm, that vehemence and fire, which are the soul of poetry. For many circumstances of those times which we call barbarous, are favourable to

the poetical spirit. That state, in which human nature shoots wild and free, though unfit for other improvements, certainly encourages the high exertions of fancy and passion.

In the infancy of societies, men live scattered and dispersed, in the midst of solitary rural scenes, where the beauties of nature are their chief entertainment. They meet with many objects, to them new and strange; their wonder and surprise are frequently excited; and by the sudden changes of fortune occurring in their unsettled state of life, their passions are raised to the utmost. Their passions have nothing to restrain them: their imagination has nothing to check it. They display themselves to one another without disguise; and converse and act in the uncovered simplicity of nature. As their feelings are strong, so their language, of itself, assumes a poetical turn. Prone to exaggerate, they describe every thing in the strongest colours; which, of course, renders their speech picturesque and figurative. Figurative language owes its rise chiefly to two causes; to the want of proper names for objects, and to the influence of imagination and passion over the form of expression. Both these causes concur in the infancy of society. Figures are commonly considered as artificial modes of speech, devised by orators and poets, after the world had advanced to a refined state. The contrary of this is the truth. Men never have used so many figures of style as in those rude ages, when, besides the power of a warm imagination to suggest lively images, the want of proper and precise terms for the ideas they would express, obliged them to have recourse to circumlocution, metaphor, comparison, and all those substituted forms of expression, which give a poetical air to language. An American chief, at this day, harangues at the head of his tribe, in a more bold metaphorical style, than a modern European would adventure to use in an epic poem.

In the progress of society, the genius and manners of men undergo a change more favourable to accuracy than to sprightliness and sublimity. As the world ad-

vances, the understanding gains grcund upon the imagination; the understanding is more exercised, the imagination less. Fewer objects occur that are new or surprising. Men apply themselves to trace the causes of things; they correct and refine one another; they subdue or disguise their passions; they form their exterior manners upon one uniform standard of politeness and civility. Human nature is pruned according to method and rule. Language advances from sterility to copiousness, and at the same time, from fervour and enthusiasm, to correctness and precision. Style becomes more chaste; but less animated. The progress of the world in this respect, resembles the progress of age in man. The powers of imagination are most vigorous and predominant in youth; those of the understanding ripen more slowly, and often attain not their maturity till the imagination begin to flag. Hence, poetry, which is the child of imagination, is frequently most glowing and animated in the first ages of society. As the ideas of our youth are remembered with a peculiar pleasure on account of their liveliness and vivacity; so the most ancient poems have often proved the greatest favourites of nations.

Poetry has been said to be more ancient than prose; and however paradoxial such an assertion may seem, yet in a qualified sense it is true. Men certainly never conversed with one another in regular numbers; but, even their ordinary language would, in ancient times, for the reasons before assigned, approach to a poetical style; and the first compositions transmitted to posterity, beyond doubt, were, in a literal sense, poems; that is, compositions in which imagination had the chief hand, formed into some kind of numbers, and pronounced with a musical modulation or tone. Music or song has been found coeval with society among the most barbarous nations. The only subjects which could prompt men, in their first rude state, to utter their thoughts in compositions of any length, were such as naturally assumed the tone of poetry; praises of their gods, or of their ancestors; commemorations of their

own warlike exploits; or lamentations over their misfortunes. And before writing was invented, no other compositions, except songs or poems, could take such hold of the imagination and memory, as to be preserved by oral tradition, and handed down from one race to another.

Hence we may expect to find poems among the antiquities of all nations. It is probable too, that an extensive search would discover a certain degree of resemblance among all the most ancient poetical productions, from whatever country they have proceeded. In a similar state of manners, similar objects and passions operating upon the imaginations of men, will stamp their productions with the same general character. Some diversity will, no doubt, be occasioned by climate and genius. But mankind never bear such resembling features as they do in the beginnings of society. Its subsequent revolutions give rise to the principal distinctions among nations, and divert, into channels widely separated, that current of human genius and manners, which descends originally from one spring. What we have been long accustomed to call the oriental vein of poetry, because some of the earliest poetical productions have come to us from the East, is probably no more oriental than accidental; it is the characteristic of an age rather than a country; and belongs, in some measure, to all nations at a certain period. Of this the works of Ossian seem to furnish a remarkable proof.

Our present subject leads us to investigate the ancient poetical remains, not so much of the East, or of the Greeks and Romans, as of the Northern nations; in order to discover whether the Gothic poetry has any resemblance to the Celtic or Gaelic, which we are about to consider. Though the Goths, under which name we usually comprehend all the Scandinavian tribes, were a people altogether fierce and martial, and noted to a proverb for their ignorance of the liberal arts, yet they too, from the earliest times, had their poets and their songs. Their poets were distinguished by the

title of Scalders, and their songs were termed Vyses[f]. Saxo-Grammaticus, a Danish historian of considerable note, who flourished in the thirteenth century, informs us, that very many of these songs, containing the ancient traditionary stories of the country, were found engraven upon rocks in the old Runic character; several of which he has translated into Latin, and inserted into his history. But his versions are plainly so paraphrastical, and forced into such an intimation of the style and the measures of the Roman poets, that one can form no judgment from them of the native spirit of the original. A more curious monument of the true Gothic poetry is preserved by Olaus Wormius, in his book de Literatura Runica. It is an Epicedium, or funeral song, composed by Regner Lodbrog; and translated by Olaus, word for word, from the original. This Lodbrog was a king of Denmark, who lived in the eighth century, famous for his wars and victories; and at the same time an eminent Scalder, or poet. It was his misfortune to fall at last into the hands of one of his enemies, by whom he was thrown into prison, and condemned to be destroyed by serpents. In this situation

[f] Olaus Wormius, in the Appendix to his Treatise de Literatura Runica, has given a particular account of the Gothic poetry, commonly called Runic, from Runes, which signifies the Gothic letters. He informs us, that there were no fewer than one hundred and thirty-six different kinds of measure or verse used in their vyses; and though we are accustomed to call rhyme a Gothic invention, he says expressly, that among all these measures, rhyme, or correspondence of final syllables, was never employed. He analyses the structure of one of these kinds of verse, that in which the poem of Lodbrog, afterwards quoted, is written; which exhibits a very singular species of harmony, if it can be allowed that name, depending neither upon rhyme nor upon metrical feet, or quantity of syllables, but chiefly upon the number of the syllables, and the disposition of the letters. "In every stanza was an equal number of lines; in every line, six syllables. In each distich, it was requiste that three words should begin with the same letter; two of the corresponding words placed in the first line of the distich, the third, in the second line. In each line were also required two syllables, but never the final ones, formed either of the same consonants, or same vowels. As an example of this measure, Olaus gives us these two Latin lines constructed exactly according to the above rules of Runic verse:

Christus caput nostrum
Coronet te bonis

The initial letters of Christus, Caput, and Coronet, make the three corresponding letters of the distich. In the first line, the first syllables of Christus and of nostrum; in the second line, the 'on' in coronet and in bonis, make the requisite correspondence of syllables. Frequent inversions and transpositions were permitted in this poetry; which would naturally follow from such laborious attention to the collocation of words.

The curious on this subject, may consult likewise Dr Hicks' Thesaurus Linguarum Septentrionatium; particularly the 23d chapter of his Grammatica Anglo-Saxonica et Mæso Gothica; where they will find a full account of the structure of the Anglo-Saxon verse, which nearly resembled the Gothic. They will find also some specimens both of Gothic and Saxon poetry. An extract, which Dr Hicks has given from the work of one of the Danish Scalders, intituled, Hervarer Saga, containing an evocation from the dead, may be found in the 6th volume of Miscellany poems, published by Mr Dryden.

he solaced himself with rehearsing all the exploits of his life. The poem is divided into twenty-nine stanzas, of ten lines each; and every stanza begins with these words, Pugnavimus ensibus, "We have fought with our swords." Olaus's version is in many places so obscure as to be hardly intelligible. I have subjoined the whole below, exactly as he has published it; and shall translate as much as may give the English reader an idea of the spirit and strain of this kind of poetry[g].

g 1
Pugnavimus ensibus
Haud post longum tempus
Cum in Gotlandia accessimus
Ad serpentis imniensi necem
Tunc impetravimus Thoram
Ex hoc vocarunt me virum
Quod serpentem transfodi
Hirsutam braccam ob illam cedem
Cuspide ictum intuli in colubrum
Ferro lucidorum stupendiorum.

2
Multum juvenis fui quando acquisivimus
Orientem versus in Oreonico freto
Vulnerum amnes avidæ feræ
Et flavipedi avi
Accepimus ibidem sonuerunt
Ad sublimes galeas
Dura ferra magnam escam
Omnis erat oceanus vulnus
Vadavit corvus in sanguine Cæsorum.

3
Alte tulimus tunc lanceas
Quando viginti anno numeravimus
Et celebrem laudem comparavimus passim
Vicimus octo barones
In oriente ante Dimini portum
Aquilæ impetravimus tunc sufficientem
Hospitii sumptum in ilia strage
Sudor decidit in vulnerum
Oceano predidit exercitus ætatem.

4
Pugnæ facta copia
Cum Helsingianos postulavimus
Ad Aulam Odini
Naves direximus in Ostium Vistulæ
Mucro potuit tum mordere
Omnis erat vulnus unda
Terra rubefacta Calido
Frendebat gladius in loricas
Gladius findebat Clypeos.

5
Nemina neminem tunc fugisse
Priusquam in navibus
Heraudus in bello caderet
Non findit navibus
Alius baro præstantior
Mare ad portum
In navibus longis post illum
Sic attulit princeps passim
Alacre in bellum cor.

6
Exercitus abjecit Clypeos
Cum hasta volavit
Ardua ad virorum pectora
Momordit Scarforum caute
Gladius in pugna
Sanguineus erat Clypeus
Antequam Rafno rex caderet
Fluxit ex virorum capitibus
Calidus in loricas sudor.

7
Habere potuerunt tum corvi
Ante Indirorum insulas
Sufficientem prædam dilaniandam
Acquisivimus feris carnivoris
Plenum prandium unico actu
Difficile erat unius facere mentionem
Oriente sole
Spicula vidi pungere
Propulerunt arcus ex se ferra.

8
Altum mugierunt enses
Antequam in Laneo campo
Eislinus rex cecidit
Processimus auro ditati
Ad terram prostratorum dimicandum
Gladius secuit clypeorum
Picturas in Galcarum conventu
Cervicum mustum ex vulneribus
Diffusum per cerebrum suum.

9
Tenuimus clypeos in sanguine
Cum hastam unximus
Ante Boring Holmum
Telorum nubes disrumpunt Clypeum
Extrusit arcus ex se metallum
Volnir cecidit in conflictu
Non erat illo rex major
Cæsi dispersi late per littora
Feræ amplectebantur escam.

10
Pugna manifeste crescebat
Antequam Freyr rex caderet
In Flandrorum terra
Cæpit cæruleus ad incidendum
Sanguine illitus in aueam
Loricam in pugna
Durus armorum mucro olim
Virgo deploravit matutinam lanienam
Multa præda dabatur feris.

11
Centies centenos vidi jacere
In navibus
Ubi Æinglanes vocatur
Navigavimus ad pugnam
Per sex dies antequam exercitus caderet
Transegimus mucronum missam

" We have fought with our swords. I was young, " when, towards the east, in the bay of Oreon, we

In exortu solis
Coactus est pro nostris gladiis
Valdiofur in bello occumbere.

12

Ruit pluvia sanguinis de gladiis
Præceps in Bardafyrde
Pallidum corpus pro accipitribus
Mumuravit arcus ubi mucro
Acriter mordebat Loricas
In conflictu
Odini Pileus Galea
Cucurrit arcus ad vulnus
Venenate acutus conspersus sudore sanguineo.

13

Tenuimus magica scuta
Alte in pugnæ ludo
Ante Hiadningum sinum
Videre licuit tum viros
Qui gladiis lacerarunt Clypeos
In gladiatorio murmure
Galeæ attritæ virorum
Erat sicut splendidam virginem
In lecto juxta se collocare

14

Dura venit tempestas Clypeis
Cadaver cecedit in terram
In Nortumbria
Erat circa matutinum tempus
Hominibus necessum erat fuger
Ex prælio ubi acute
Cassidis campos mordebant gladii
Erat hoc veluti Juvenem viduam
In primaria sede osculari.

15

Herthiofe evasit fortunatus
In Australibus Orcadibus ipse
Victoriæ in nostris hominibus
Cogebatur in armorum nimbo
Rogvaldus occumbere
Iste venit summus super accipitres
Luctus in gladiorum ludo
Strenue jactabat concussor
Galeæ sanguinis teli.

16

Quilibet jacebat transversim supra alium
Gaudebat pugna lætus
Accipiter ob gladiorum ludum
Non fecit acquilam aut aprum
Qui Irlandiam gubernavit
Conventus fiebat ferri and Clypei
Marstanus rex jejunis
Fiebat in vedræ sinu
Præda data corvis.

17

Bellatorem multum vidi cadere
Mane ante machæram
Virum in mucronum dissidio
Filio meo incidit mature
Gladitus juxta cor
Egillus fecit Agnerum spoliatum
Impertertitum virum vita
Sonuit lancea prope Hamdi
Griscam loricam splendebant vexilla.

18

Verborum tenaces vidi dissecare
Haud minutim pro lupis
Endili maris ensibus
Erat per Hebdomadæ spatium
Quasi mulieres vinum apportarent
Rubefactæ erant naves
Valde in strepitu armorum
Scissa erat lorica
In Scioldungorum prælio.

19

Pulchricomum vidi crepui culas cere
Virginis amatorem circa matutinum
Et confabulationis amicum viduarum
Erat sicut calidum balneum
Vinei vasis nympha portaret
Nos in Ilæ freto
Antiqnam Orn rex caderet
Sanguineum Clypeum vidi ruptum
Hoc invertit virorum vitam.

20

Egimus gladiorum ad cædem
Ludum in Lindis insula
Cum regibus tribus
Pauci potuerunt inde lætari
Cecedit multus in rictum ferarum
Accipiter dilaniavit carnem cum lupo
Ut satur inde discederit
Hybernorum sanguis in oceanum
Copiose decidit per mactationis tempus.

21

Alte gladias mordebat Clypeos
Tunc cum aurei coloris
Hasta fricabat loricas
Videre licuit in Onlugs insula
Per secula multum post
Ibi fuit an gladiorum ludos
Reges processerunt
Rubicundum erat circa insulam
Ar volans Draco vulnerum.

22

Quid est viro forti morte certius
Etsi ipse in armorum nimbo
Adversus collocatus sit
Sæpe deplorat ætatem
Qui nunquam premitur
Malum ferunt timidum incitare
Acquilam ad gladiorum ludum
Meticulosus venit nuspiam
Cordi suo usui.

23

Hoc numero æquum ut procedat
In contactu gladiorum
Juvenis unus contra alterum
Non retrocedat vir a viro
Hoc fuit viri fortis nobilitas diu
Semper debet amoris amicus virginum
Audax esse in fremitu armorum.

24

Hoc videtur mihi re vera
Quod fata sequimur
Rarus transgreditur fata Parcarum
Non destinavi Ellæ
De vitæ exitu meæ
Cum ego sanguinem semi mortuus tegerem
Et naves in aquas protrusi
Passim impetravimus tum feris
Escam in Scotiæ sinubus.

" made torrents of blood flow to gorge the ravenous beast " of prey, and the yellow-footed bird. There resounded " the hard steel upon the lofty helmets of men. The " whole ocean was one wound. The crow waded in " the blood of the slain. When we had numbered twen- " ty years, we lifted our spears on high, and every where " spread our renown. Eight barons we overcame in the " east, before the port of Diminum; and plentifully we " feasted the eagle in that slaughter. The warm stream " of wounds ran into the ocean. The army fell before " us. When we steered our ships into the mouth of the " Vistula, we sent the Helsingians to the hall of Odion. " Then did the sword bite. The waters were all one " wound. The earth was dyed red with the warm " stream. The sword rung upon the coats of mail, and " clove bucklers in twain. None fled on that day, till " among his ships Heraudus fell. Than him no braver " baron cleaves the sea with ships; a chearful heart did " he ever bring to the combat. Then the host threw " away their shields, when the uplifted spear flew at the " breast of heroes. The swords bit the Scarfian rocks; " bloody was the shield in battle, until Rafno the king " was slain. From the heads of warriors the warm sweat " streamed down their armour. The crows around the " Indirian islands had an ample prey. It were difficult

25

Hoc ridere me facit semper
Quod balderi patris scamna
Parata scio in aula
Bibemus cerevisiam brevi
Ex concavis crateribus craniorum
Non gemit vir fortis contra mortem
Magnifici in Odini domibus
Non venio desperabundis
Verbis ad Odini aulam.

26

Hic vellent nunc omnes
Filii Auslaugæ gladiis
Amarum bellum excitare
Si exacte scirent
Calamitates nostras
Quem non pauci angues
Venenati me discerpunt
Matrem accepi meis
Filiis ita ut corda valeant.

27

Valde inclinatur ad hæreditatem
Crudele stat nocumentum a vipera
Anguis inhabitat aulum cordis
Speramus alterius ad Othini
Virgam in Ellæ sanguine
Filiis meis livescit
Sua ira rubescet
Non acres juvenes
Sessionem tranquillam facient.

28

Habeo quinquagies
Prælia sub signis facta
Ex belli invitatione et semel
Minime putavi hominum
Quod me futurus esset
Juvenis dictu mucronem rubefacere
Alius rex præstantior
Nos asæ invitabunt
Non est lugenda mors.

29

Fert animus finire
Invitant me Dysæ
Quas ex Othini Aula
Othinus mihi misit
Lætus cerevisiam cum Asis
In summa sede bibam
Vitæ elapsæ sunt horæ
Ridens moriar.

" to single out one among so many deaths. At the ris-
" ing of the sun I beheld the spears piercing the bodies
" of foes, and the bows throwing forth their steel-pointed
" arrows. Loud roared the swords in the plains of Lano.
" The virgin long bewailed the slaughter of that morn-
" ing." In this strain the poet continues to describe several other military exploits. The images are not much varied; the noise of arms, the streaming of blood, and the feasting the birds of prey, often recurring. He mentions the death of two of his sons in battle; and the lamentation he describes as made for one of them is very singular. A Grecian or Roman poet would have introduced the virgins, or nymphs of the wood, bewailing the untimely fall of a young hero. But, says our Gothic poet, " when Rogvaldus was slain, for him mourned
" all the hawks of heaven," as lamenting a benefactor who had so liberally supplied them with prey; " for
" boldly," as he adds, " in the strife of swords did the
" breaker of helmets throw the spear of blood."

The poem concludes with sentiments of the highest bravery and contempt of death. " What is more cer-
" tain to the brave man than death, though amidst the
" storm of swords he stands always ready to oppose it?
" He only regrets this life who hath never known dis-
" tress. The timorous man allures the devouring eagle
" to the field of battle. The coward, wherever he comes,
" is useless to himself. This I esteem honourable, that
" the youth should advance to the combat fairly match-
" ed one against another; nor man retreat from man.
" Long was this the warrior's highest glory. He who
" aspires to the love of virgins, ought always to be fore-
" most in the roar of arms. It appears to me of truth,
" that we are led by the fates. Seldom can any over-
" come the appointment of destiny. Little did I fore-
" see that Ella[b] was to have my life in his hands, in
" that day, when fainting I concealed my blood. and
" pushed forth my ship into the waves, after we had
" spread a repast for the beasts of prey, throughout the
" Scottish bays. But this makes me always rejoice, that

[b] This was the name of his enemy who had condemned him to death.

" in the halls of our father Balder (or Odin) I know " there are seats prepared, where, in a short time, we " shall be drinking ale out of the hollow skulls of our " enemies. In the house of the mighty Odin, no brave " man laments death. I come not with the voice of " despair to Odin's hall. How eagerly would all the " sons of Aslauga now rush to war, did they know the " distress of their father, whom a multitude of venom- " ous serpents tear! I have given to my children " a mother who hath filled their hearts with valour. " I am fast approaching to my end. A cruel death a- " waits me from the viper's bite. A snake dwells in " the midst of my heart. I hope that the sword of some " of my sons shall yet be stained with the blood of Ella. " The valiant youths will wax red with anger, and will " not sit in peace. Fifty and one times have I reared " the standard in battle. In my youth I learned to dye " the sword in blood: my hope was then, that no king " among men would be more renowned than me. The " goddesses of death will now soon call me; I must not " mourn my death. Now I end my song. The god- " desses invite me away; they whom Odin has sent " to me from his hall. I will sit upon a lofty seat " and drink ale joyfully with the goddesses of death. " The hours of my life are run out. I will smile when " I die."

This is such poetry as we might expect from a barbarous nation. It breathes a most ferocious spirit. It is wild, harsh, and irregular; but at the same time animated and strong; the style, in the original, full of inversions, and, as we learn from some of Olaus's notes, highly metaphorical and figured.

But when we open the works of Ossian, a very different scene presents itself. There we find the fire and enthusiasm of the most early times, combined with an amazing degree of regularity and art. We find tenderness, and even delicacy of sentiment, greatly predominant over fierceness and barbarity. Our hearts are melted with the softest feelings, and at the same time elevated with the highest ideas of magnanimity, generosi-

ty, and true heroism. When we turn from the poetry of Lodbrog to that of Ossian, it is like passing from a savage desert, into a fertile and cultivated country. How is this to be accounted for? or by what means to be reconciled with the remote antiquity attributed to these poems? This is a curious point, and requires to be illustrated.

That the ancient Scots were of Celtic original, is past all doubt. Their conformity with the Celtic nations in language, manners, and religion, proves it to a full demonstration. The Celtæ, a great and mighty people, altogether distinct from the Goths and Teutones, once extended their dominion over all the west of Europe; but seem to have had their most full and complete establishment in Gaul. Wherever the Celtæ or Gauls are mentioned by ancient writers, we seldom fail to hear of their druids and their bards; the institution of which two orders, was the capital distinction of their manners and policy. The druids were their philosophers and priests; the bards, their poets and recorders of heroic actions: and both of these orders of men, seem to have subsisted among them, as chief members of the state, from time immemorial[f]. We must not therefore imagine the Celtæ to have been altogether a gross and rude nation. They possessed from very remote ages a formed system of discipline and manners, which appears to have had a deep and lasting influence. Ammianus Marcellinus gives them this express testimony, that there flourished among them the study of the most laudable arts; introduced by the bards, whose office it was to sing in heroic verse the gallant actions of illustrious men; and by the druids, who lived together in colleges and societies, after the Pythagorean manner, and philosophising upon the highest subjects, asserted the immor-

[f] There are three tribes who are respected in different degrees, viz. the bards, the priests, and druids. The bards are poets, and those who record the actions of their heroes.——Strabo, B. IV.

There are likewise among them the composers of poems, whom they call bards; and these, with instruments like the lyre, celebrate the praises of some, and rail against others.——Diod. Sicul. B. V.

And those who are called bards, are their oracles, and these bards are poets who sing praises in odes.——Posidonus ap. Atheneum, B. VI.

talitv of the human soul.[k] Though Julius Cæsar, in his account of Gaul, does expressly mention the bards, yet it is plain, that under the title of druids, he comprehends that whole college or order; of which the bards, who, it is probable, were the disciples of the druids, undoubtedly made a part. It deserves remark, that according to his account, the druidical institution first took rise in Britain, and passed from thence into Gaul; so that they who aspired to be thorough masters of that learning were wont to resort to Britain. He adds too, that such as were to be initiated among the druids, were obliged to commit to their memory a great number of verses, insomuch that some employed twenty years in this course of education; and that they did not think it lawful to record these poems in writing, but sacredly handed them down by tradition from race to race.[l]

So strong was the attachment of the Celtic nations to their poetry and their bards, that amidst all the changes of their government and manners, even long after the order of the druids was extinct, and the national religion altered, the bards continued to flourish; not as a set of strolling songsters, like the Greek Ἀοιδοὶ or Rhapsodists, in Homer's time, but as an order of men highly respected in the state, and supported by a public establishment. We find them, according to the testimonies of Strabo and Diodorus, before the age of Augustus Cæsar, and we find them remaining under the same name, and exercising the same functions as of old, in Ireland, and in the north of Scotland, almost down to our own times. It is well known, that in both these countries, every Regulus or chief had his own bard, who was considered as an officer of rank in his court, and had lands assigned him, which descended to his family. Of the honour in which the bards were

k Per hæc loca (speaking of Gaul) hominibus paulatim excultis, viguere studia laudabilium doctrinarum; inchoata per bardos, & euhages, & druidas. Et bardi quidem fortia virorum illustrium facta heroicis composita versibus cum dulcibus lyræ modulis cantitarunt. Euhages vero scrutantes seriem & sublimia naturæ pandere conabantur, Inter hos druidæ ingeniis celsiores, ut auctoritas Pythagoræ decrevit, sodalitiis adstricti consortii, quæstionibus altarum occultarumque rerum erecti sunt; et despectantes humana pronunciarunt animas immortales.—— Amm. Marcellinus, l. 15. cap. 9.

l Vide Cæsar de bello Gall. lib. 6.

held, many instances occur in Ossian's poems. On all important occasions, they were the ambassadors between contending chiefs; and their persons were held sacred. "Cairbar feared to stretch his sword to the "bards, though his soul was dark Loose the bards, "said his brother Cathmor, they are sons of other "times. Their voice shall be heard in other ages, "when the kings of Temora have failed."

From all this, the Celtic tribes clearly appear to have been addicted in so high a degree to poetry, and to have made it so much their study from the earliest times, as may remove our wonder at meeting with a vein of higher poetical refinement among them, than was at first sight to have been expected among nations, whom we are accustomed to call barbarous. Barbarity, I must observe, is a very equivocal term; it admits of many different forms and degrees; and though in all of them it excludes polished manners, it is, however, not inconsistent with generous sentiments and tender affections[m]. What degrees of friendship, love, and heroism, may possibly be found to prevail in a rude state of society, no one can say. Astonishing instances of them we know, from history, have sometimes appeared; and a few characters distinguished by those high qualities, might lay a foundation for a set of manners being introduced into the songs of the bards, more refined, it is probable, and exalted, according to the usual poetic licence, than the real manners of the country. In par-

m Surely among the wild Lapianders, if any where, barbarity is in its most perfect state. Yet their love songs, which Scheffer has given us in his Lapponia, are a proof that natural tenderness of sentiment may be found in a country, into which the least glimmering of science has never penetrated. To most English readers these songs are well known by the elegant translations of them in the Spectator, No 366 and 406. I shall subjoin Scheffer's Latin version of one of them, which has the appearance of being strictly literal.

Sol, clarissimum emitte lumen in paludem Orro. Si enisus in summa picearum cacumina scirem me visurum Orra plaudem, in ea niterer, ut viderem inter quos amica, nea esset flores; omnes sus-scinderem frutices ibi enatos, omnes ramos præsecarem, os virente ramos. Cursum nubium essem secutus, quæ iter suum istituunt versus paudem Orra, si ad te volare possem alis, cornicum alis. Sed mihi desunt alæ, alæ querquedulæ pedesque, anserum pedes plantæve bonæ, quæ deferre me valeant ad te. Satis xpectasti diu, per tot dies, tot dies tuos optimos, oculis tuis jucundissimis, corde tuo micissimo. Quod si longissime velles effugere, cito tamen te consequerer. Quid firmius validiusve esse potest quam contorti nervicatenæve ferræ, quæ durissime ligant? ic amor contorquet caput nostrum, mutat cogitationes & sententias. Puerorum voluus, voluntas venti; juvenum cogitationes, longæ cogitationes. Quos si audirem omnes, via, a via justa declinarem. Unum est consilium quod capiam; ita scio vitam rectiam me reperturum.—Schefferi Lapponia, Cap. 25.

ticular, with respect to heroism; the great employment of the Celtic bards was, to delineate the characters, and sing the praises of heroes. So Lucan:

> Vos quoque qui fortes animos, belloque peremptos,
> Laudibus in longam vates diffunditis ævum
> Plurima securi fudistis carmina bardi. Phars. l. 1.

Now when we consider a college or order of men, who, cultivating poetry throughout a long series of ages, had their imaginations continually employed on the ideas of heroism; who had all the poems and panegyrics which were composed by their predecessors handed down to them with care; who rivalled and endeavoured to outstrip those who had gone before them, each in the celebration of his particular hero; is it not natural to think, that at length the character of a hero would appear in their songs with the highest lustre, and be adorned with qualities truly noble? Some of the qualities indeed which distinguish a Fingal, moderation, humanity, and clemency, would not probably be the first ideas of heroism occurring to a barbarous people: but no sooner had such ideas begun to dawn on the minds of poets, than, as the human mind easily opens to the native representation of human perfection, they would be seized and embraced; they would enter into their panegyrics; they would afford materials for succeeding bards to work upon, and improve; they would contribute not a little to exalt the public manners. For such songs as these, familiar to the Celtic warriors from their childhood, and throughout their whole life, both in war and in peace, their principal entertainment must have had a very considerable influence in propagating among them real manners nearly approaching to the poetical, and in forming even such a hero as Fingal: especially when we consider that among their limited objects of ambition, among the few advantages which, in a savage state, man could obtain over man, the chief was fame, and that immortality which they expected to receive from their virtues and exploits, in the songs of bards[n].

[n] When Edward I. conquered Wales, he put to death all the Welch bards. The cruel policy plainly shews, how great an influence he imagined the songs of these bar

Having made these remarks on the Celtic poetry and bards in general, I shall next consider the particular advantages which Ossian possessed. He appears clearly to have lived in a period which enjoyed all the benefit I just now mentioned of traditionary poetry. The exploits of Trathal, Trenmor, and the other ancestors of Fingal, are spoken of as familiarly known. Ancient bards are frequently alluded to. In one remarkable passage, Ossian describes himself as living in a sort of classical age, enlightened by the memorials of former times, which were conveyed in the songs of bards; and points at a period of darkness and ignorance which lay beyond the reach of tradition. "His words," says he, "came only by halves to our ears; they were "dark as the tales of other times, before the light of "the song arose." Ossian himself appears to have been endowed by nature with an exquisite sensibility of heart; prone to that tender melancholy which is so often an attendant on great genius; and susceptible equally of strong and of soft emotions. He was not only a professed bard, educated with care, as we may easily believe, to all the poetical art then known, and connected, as he shews us himself, in intimate friendship with the other contemporary bards, but a warrior also; and the son of the most renowned hero and prince of his age. This formed a conjunction of circumstances, uncommonly favourable towards exalting the imagination of a poet. He relates expeditions in which he had been engaged; he sings of battles in which he had fought and overcome; he had beheld the most illustrious scenes which that age could exhibit, both of heroism in war, and magnificence in peace. For however rude the magnificence of those times may seem to us, we must remember that all ideas of magnificence are comparative, and that the age of Fingal was an era of distinguished splendour in that part of the world. Fingal reigned over a considerable territory; he was enriched with the spoils of the Roman province; he

to have over the minds of the people; and of what nature he judged that influence to be. The Welch bards were of the same Celtic race with the Scottish and Irish.

was ennobled by his victories and great actions; and was in all respects a personage of much higher dignity than any of the chieftains, or heads of clans, who lived in the same country, after a more extensive monarchy was established.

The manners of Ossian's age, so far as we can gather them from his writings, were abundantly favourable to a poetical genius. The two dispiriting vices, to which Longinus imputes the decline of poetry, covetousness and effeminacy, were as yet unknown. The cares of men were few. They lived a roving, indolent life; hunting and war their principal employments; and their chief amusements, the music of bards, and "the feast of shells." The great object pursued by heroic spirits, was "to receive their fame," that is, to become worthy of being celebrated in the songs of bards; and "to have their name on the four grey "stones." To die unlamented by a bard, was deemed so great a misfortune, as even to disturb their ghosts in another state. "They wander in thick mists beside "the reedy lake; but never shall they rise, without "the song, to the dwelling of winds." After death, they expected to follow employments of the same nature with those which had amused them on earth; to fly with their friends on clouds, to pursue airy deer, and to listen to their praise in the mouths of bards. In such times as these, in a country where poetry hath been so long cultivated, and so highly honoured, is it any wonder, that among the race and succession of bards, one Homer should arise; a man, who, endowed with a natural and happy genius, favoured by peculiar advantages of birth and condition, and meeting, in the course of his life, with a variety of incidents proper to fire his imagination, and to touch his heart, should attain a degree of eminence in poetry, worthy to draw the admiration of more refined ages?

The compositions of Ossian are so strongly marked with characters of antiquity, that although there were no external proof to support that antiquity, hardly any reader of judgment and taste could hesitate in referring

them to a very remote era. There are four great stages through which men successively pass in the progress of society. The first and earliest is the life of hunters; pasturage succeeds to this, as the ideas of property begin to take root; next agriculture; and lastly, commerce. Throughout Ossian's poems, we plainly find ourselves in the first of these periods of society; during which, hunting was the chief employment of men, and the principal method of their procuring subsistence. Pasturage was not indeed wholly unknown; for we hear of dividing the herd in the case of a divorce; but the allusions to herds and to cattle are not many; and of agriculture we find no traces. No cities appear to have been built in the territories of Fingal. No arts are mentioned, except that of navigation and of working in iron*. Every thing presents to us the most simple and unimproved manners. At their feasts, the heroes prepared their own repast; they sat round the light of the burning oak; the wind lifted their locks, and whistled through their open halls. Whatever was beyond the necessaries of life was known to them only as the spoil of the Roman province; "the gold of the stranger; the lights of the "stranger; the steeds of the stranger; the children of "the rein."

This representation of Ossian's times must strike us the more, as genuine and authentic, when it is compared with a poem of later date, which Mr Macpherson has preserved in one of his notes. It is that wherein five bards are represented as passing the evening in the

* Their skill in navigation need not at all surprise us. Liv'ng in the western islands, along the coast, or in a country which is every where intersected with arms of the sea, one of the first objects of their attention, from the earliest time, must have been how to traverse the waters. Hence that knowledge of the stars so necessary for guiding them by night, of which we find several traces in Ossian's works: particularly in the beautiful description of Cathmor's shield, in the seventh book of Temora. Among all the northern maritime nations, navigation was very early studied. Piratical incursions were the chief means they employed for acquiring booty; and were among the first exploits which distinguished them in the world. Even the savage Americans were, at their first discovery, found to possess the most surprising skill and dexterity in navigating their immense lakes and rivers.

The description of Cuthullin's chariot, in the first book of Fingal, has been objected to by some, as representing greater magnificence than is consistent with the supposed poverty of that age. But this chariot is plainly only a horse-litter; and the gems mentioned in the descriptions are no other than the shining stones or pebbles, known to be frequently found along the western coast of Scotland.

house of a chief, and each of them separately giving his description of the night. The night scenery is beautiful; and the author has plainly imitated the style and manner of Ossian: but he has allowed some images to appear, which betray a later period of society. For we meet with windows clapping, the herds of goats and cows seeking shelter, the shepherd wandering, corn on the plain, and the wakeful hind rebuilding the shocks of corn which had been overturned by the tempest. Whereas, in Ossian's works, from beginning to end, all is consistent; no modern allusion drops from him; but every where, the same face of rude nature appears; a country wholly uncultivated, thinly inhabited, and recently peopled. The grass of the rock, the flower of the heath, the thistle with its beard, are the chief ornaments of his landscapes. "The desart," says Fingal, "is enough to me, with all its woods and "deer."

The circle of ideas and transactions, is no wider than suits such an age: nor any great diversity introduced into characters, than the events of that period would necessarily display. Valour and bodily strength are the admired qualities. Contentions arise, as is usual among savage nations, from the slightest causes. To be affronted at a tournament, or to be omitted in the invitation to a feast, kindles a war. Women are often carried away by force; and the whole tribe, as in the Homeric times, rise to avenge the wrong. The heroes show refinement of sentiment, indeed, on several occasions, but none of manners. They speak of their past actions with freedom, boast of their exploits, and sing their own praise. In their battles, it is evident that drums, trumpets, or bag-pipes, were not known or used. They had no expedient for giving the military alarms, but striking a shield, or raising a loud cry. And hence the loud and terrible voice of Fingal is often mentioned, as a necessary qualification of a great general, like the βουν α'γαθος Μενελαος of Homer. Of military discipline or skill, they appear to have been entirely destitute. Their armies seem not to have

been numerous; their battles were disorderly, and terminated, for the most part, by a personal combat, or wrestling, of the two chiefs; after which, "the bard "sung the song of peace, and the battle ceased along "the field."

The manner of composition bears all the marks of the greatest antiquity. No artful transitions, nor full and extended connection of parts; such as we find among the poets of later times, when order and regularity of composition were more studied and known; but a style always rapid and vehement; in narration concise even to abruptness, and leaving several circumstances to be supplied by the reader's imagination. The language has all that figurative cast, which, as I before shewed, partly a glowing and undisciplined imagination, partly the sterility of language, and the want of proper terms, have always introduced into the early speech of nations; and in several respects, it carries a remarkable resemblance to the style of the Old Testament. It deserves particular notice, as one of the most genuine and decisive characters of antiquity, that very few general terms, or abstract ideas, are to be met with in the whole collection of Ossian's works. The ideas of men, at first, were all particular. They had not words to express general conceptions. These were the consequence of more profound reflection, and longer acquaintance with the arts of thought and of speech. Ossian, accordingly, almost never expresses himself in the abstract. His ideas extended little farther than to the objects he saw around him. A public, a community, the universe, were conceptions beyond his sphere. Even a mountain, a sea, or a lake, which he has occasion to mention, though only in a simile, are for the most part particularised; it is the hill of Cromla, the storm of the sea of Malmor, or the reeds of the lake of Lego—a mode of expression, which, whilst it is characteristical of ancient ages, is at the same time highly favourable to descriptive poetry. For the same reasons, personification is a poetical figure not very common with Ossian. Inanimate objects

such as winds, trees, flowers, he sometimes personifies with great beauty. But the personifications which are so familiar to later poets, of Fame, Time, Terror, Virtue, and the rest of that class, were unknown to our Celtic bard. These were modes of conception too abstract for his age.

All these are marks so undoubted, and some of them too so nice and delicate, of the most early times, as put the high antiquity of these poems out of question: especially when we consider, that if there had been any imposture in this case, it must have been contrived and executed in the Highlands of Scotland, two or three centuries ago; as, up to this period, both by manuscripts, and by the testimony of a multitude of living witnesses, concerning the incontrovertible tradition of these poems, they can be clearly traced. Now, this is a period when that country enjoyed no advantages for a composition of this kind, which it may not be supposed to have enjoyed in as great, if not in a greater degree, a thousand years before. To suppose that two or three hundred years ago, when we well know the Highlands to have been in a state of gross ignorance and barbarity, there should have arisen in that country a poet, of such exquisite genius, and of such deep knowledge of mankind, and of history, as to divest himself of the ideas and manners of his own age, and to give us a just and natural picture of a state of society ancienter by a thousand years; one who could support this counterfeited antiquity through such a large collection of poems, without the least inconsistency; and who, possessed of all this genius and art, had, at the same time, the self-denial of concealing himself, and of ascribing his own works to an antiquated bard, without the imposture being detected; is a supposition that transcends all bounds of credibility.

There are, besides, two other circumstances to be attended to, still of greater weight, if possible, against this hypothesis. One is, the total absence of religious ideas from this work; for which the translator has, in his preface, given a very probable account, on the

footing of its being the work of Ossian. The druidical superstition was, in the days of Ossian, on the point of its final extinction; and for particular reasons, odious to the family of Fingal; whilst the Christian faith was not yet established. But had it been the work of one, to whom the ideas of Christianity were familiar from his infancy, and who had superadded to them also the bigotted superstition of a dark age and country; it is impossible but, in some passage or other, the traces of them would have appeared. The other circumstance is, the entire silence which reigns with respect to all the great clans, or families, which are now established in the Highlands. The origin of these several clans is known to be very ancient: and it is as well known, that there is no passion by which a native Highlander is more distinguished, than by attachment to his clan, and jealousy for its honour. That a Highland bard, in forging a work relating to the antiquities of his country, should have inserted no circumstance which pointed out the rise of his clan, which ascertained its antiquity, or increased its glory, is of all suppositions that can be formed, the most improbable; and the silence on this head amounts to a demonstration that the author lived before any of the present great clans were formed or known.

Assuming it then, as we well may, for certain, that the poems now under consideration, are genuine venerable monuments of very remote antiquity; I proceed to make some remarks upon their general spirit and strain.—The two great characteristics of Ossian's poetry are, tenderness and sublimity. It breathes nothing of the gay and cheerful kind; an air of solemnity and seriousness is diffused over the whole Ossian is perhaps the only poet who never relaxes, or lets himself down into the light and amusing strain; which I readily admit to be no small disadvantage to him, with the bulk of readers. He moves perpetually in the high region of the grand and the pathetic. One key-note is struck at the beginning, and supported to the end; nor is any ornament introduced but what is perfectly

concordant with the general tone or melody. The events recorded are all serious and grave; the scenery throughout, wild and romantic. The extended heath by the sea-shore, the mountain shaded with mist; the torrent rushing through a solitary valley; the scattered oaks; and the tombs of warriors overgrown with moss; all produce a solemn attention in the mind, and prepare it for great and extraordinary events. We find not in Ossian an imagination that sports itself, and dresses out gay trifles to please the fancy. His poetry, more perhaps than that of any other writer, deserves to be styled, 'The Poetry of the Heart.' It is a heart penetrated with noble sentiments, and with sublime and tender passions; a heart that glows, and kindles the fancy; a heart that is full, and pours itself forth. Ossian did not write, like modern poets, to please readers and critics. He sung from the love of poetry and song. His delight was to think of the heroes among whom he had flourished; to recal the affecting incidents of his life; to dwell upon his past wars, and loves, and friendships; till, as he expresses it himself, "there comes a voice to Ossian, and awakes his soul. "It is the voice of years that are gone; they roll "before me with all their deeds;" and under this poetic inspiration, giving vent to his genius, no wonder we should so often hear, and acknowledge in his strains, the powerful and ever-pleasing voice of nature.

———Arte, natura potentior omni.—
Est Deus in nobis, agitante calescimus illo.

It is necessary here to observe, that the beauties of Ossian's writings cannot be felt by those who have given them only a single or hasty perusal. His manner is so different from that of the poets to whom we are most accustomed; his style is so concise, and so much crowded with imagery; the mind is kept at such a stretch in accompanying the author; that an ordinary reader is at first apt to be dazzled and fatigued, rather than pleased. His poems require to be taken up at intervals, and to be frequently reviewed; and then it

is impossible but his beauties must open to every reader who is capable of sensibility. Those who have the highest degree of it will relish them most.

As Homer is, of all the great poets, the one whose manner and whose times came the nearest to Ossian's, we are naturally led to run a parallel in some instances between the Greek and the Celtic bard. For though Homer lived more than a thousand years before Ossian, it is not from the age of the world, but from the state of society, that we are to judge of resembling times. The Greek has, in several points, a manifest superiority. He introduces a greater variety of incidents; he possesses a larger compass of ideas; has more diversity in his characters; and a much deeper knowledge of human nature. It was not to be expected, that in any of these particulars, Ossian could equal Homer. For Homer lived in a country where society was much farther advanced; he had beheld many more objects; cities built and flourishing; laws instituted; order, discipline, and arts begun. His field of observation was much larger, and more splendid; his knowledge, of course, more extensive; his mind also, it shall be granted, more penetrating. But if Ossian's ideas and objects be less diversified than those of Homer, they are all, however, of the kind fittest for poetry: the bravery and generosity of heroes, the tenderness of lovers, the attachments of friends, parents, and children. In a rude age and country, though the events that happen be few, the undissipated mind broods over them more; they strike the imagination, and fire the passions in a higher degree; and of consequence became happier materials to a poetical genius, than the same events when scattered through the wide circle of more varied action and cultivated life.

Homer is a more cheerful and sprightly poet than Ossian. You decern in him all the Greek vivacity; whereas Ossian uniformly maintains the gravity and solemnity of a Celtic hero. This too is in a great measure to be accounted for from the different situations in which they lived, partly personal, and partly nation-

al. Ossian had survived all his friends, and was disposed to melancholy by the incidents of his life. But besides this, cheerfulness is one of the many blessings which we owed to formed society. The solitary wild state is always a serious one. Bating the sudden and violent bursts of mirth, which sometimes break forth at their dances and feasts, the savage American tribes have been noted by all travellers for their gravity and taciturnity. Somewhat of this taciturnity may be also remarked in Ossian. On all occasions he is frugal of his words; and never gives you more of an image or a description, than is just sufficient to place it before you in one clear point of view. It is a blaze of lightning, which flashes and vanishes. Homer is more extended in his descriptions; and fills them up with a greater variety of circumstances. Both the poets are dramatic; that is, they introduce their personages frequently speaking before us. But Ossian is concise and rapid in his speeches, as in every other thing. Homer, with the Greek vivacity, has also some portion of the Greek loquacity. His speeches indeed are highly characteristical; and to them we are much indebted for that admirable display he has given of human nature. Yet, if he be tedious any where, is is in these: some of them trifling, and some of them plainly unseasonable. Both poets are eminently sublime; but a difference may be remarked in the species of their sublimity. Homer's sublimity is accompanied with more impetuosity and fire; Ossian's with more of a solemn and awful grandeur. Homer hurries you along; Ossian elevates and fixes you in astonishment. Homer is most sublime in actions and battles; Ossian, in description and sentiment. In the pathetic, Homer, when he chuses to exert it, has great power; but Ossian exerts that power much oftener, and has the character of tenderness far more deeply imprinted on his works. No poet knew better how to seize and melt the heart. With regard to dignity of sentiment, the pre-eminence must clearly be given to Ossian. This is indeed a surprising circumstance, that in point of humanity, magnanimity,

virtuous feelings of every kind, our rude Celtic bard should be distinguished to such a degree, that not only the heroes of Homer, but even those of the polite and refined Virgil, are left far behind by those of Ossian.

After these general observations on the genius and spirit of our author, I now proceed to a nearer view, and more accurate examination of his works: and as Fingal is the first great poem in this collection, it is proper to begin with it. To refuse the title of an epic poem to Fingal, because it is not, in every particular, exactly conformable to the practice of Homer and Virgil, were the mere squeamishness and pedantry of criticism. Examined even according to Aristotle's rules, it will be found to have all the essential requisites of a true and regular epic; and to have several of them in so high a degree, as at first view to raise our astonishment at finding Ossian's composition so agreeable to rules of which he was entirely ignorant. But our astonishment will cease, when we consider from what source Aristotle drew those rules. Homer knew no more of the laws of criticism than Ossian. But guided by nature, he composed in verse a regular story, founded on heroic actions, which all posterity admired. Aristotle, with great sagacity and penetration, traced the causes of this general admiration. He observed what it was in Homer's composition, and in the conduct of his story, which gave it such power to please; from this observation he deduced the rules which poets ought to follow, who would write and please like Homer; and to a composition formed according to such rules, he gave the name of an epic poem. Hence the whole system arose. Aristotle studied nature in Homer: Homer and Ossian wrote from nature. No wonder that among all the three, there should be such agreement and conformity.

The fundamental rules delivered by Aristotle concerning an epic poem, are these: That the action which is the ground work of the poem should be one, complete, and great; that it should be feigned, not

merely historical; that it should be enlivened with characters and manners; and heightened by the marvellous.

But before entering on any of these, it may perhaps be asked, what is the moral of Fingal? For, according to M. Bossu, an epic poem is no other than an allegory contrived to illustrate some moral truth. The poet, says this critic, must begin with fixing on some maxim, or instruction, which he intends to inculcate on mankind. He next forms a fable, like one of Æsop's, wholly with a view to the moral; and having thus settled and arranged his plan, he then looks into traditionary history for names and incidents, to give his fable some air of probability. Never did a more frigid, pedantic notion, enter into the mind of a critic. We may safely pronounce, that he who should compose an epic poem after this manner, who should first lay down a moral and contrive a plan, before he had thought of his personages and actors, might deliver indeed very sound instruction, but would find few readers. There cannot be the least doubt that the first object which strikes an epic poet, which fires his genius, and gives him any idea of his work, is the action or subject he is to celebrate. Hardly is there any tale, any subject, a poet can chuse for such a work, but will afford some general moral instruction. An epic poem is, by its nature, one of the most moral of all poetical compositions: but its moral tendency is by no means to be limited to some common-place maxim, which may be gathered from the story. It arises from the admiration of heroic actions, which such a composition is peculiarly calculated to produce; from the virtuous emotions which the characters and incidents raise, whilst we read it from the happy impression which all the parts separately, as well as the whole taken together, leave upon the mind. However, if a general moral be still insisted on, Fingal obviously furnishes one, not inferior to that of any other poet, viz. That wisdom and bravery always triumph over brutal force; or another noble still: That the most complete victory over an enemy

is obtained by that moderation and generosity which convert him into a friend.

The unity of the epic action, which, of all Aristotle's rules is the chief and most material, is so strictly preserved in Fingal, that it must be perceived by every reader. It is a more complete unity than what arises from relating the actions of one man, which the Greek critic justly censures as imperfect; it is the unity of one enterprise, the deliverance of Ireland from the invasion of Swaran: an enterprise which has surely the full heroic dignity. All the incidents recorded bear a constant reference to one end; no double plot is carried on; but the parts unite into a regular whole: And as the action is one and great, so it is an intire or complete action. For we find, as the critic farther requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end; a nodus, or intrigue in the poem; difficulties occurring through Cuthullin's rashness and bad success; those difficulties gradually surmounted; and at last the work conducted to that happy conclusion which is held essential to epic poetry. Unity is indeed observed with greater exactness in Fingal, than in almost any other epic composition. For not only is unity of subject maintained, but that of time and place also. The autumn is clearly pointed out as the season of the action; and, from beginning to end, the scene is never shifted from the heath of Lena, along the sea-shore. The duration of the action in Fingal is much shorter than in the Iliad or Æneid. But sure, there may be shorter as well as longer heroic poems; and if the authority of Aristotle be also required for this, he says expressly, that the epic composition is indefinite as to the time of its duration. Accordingly the action of the Iliad lasts only forty-seven days, whilst that of the Æneid is continued for more than a year.

Throughout the whole of Fingal, there reigns that grandeur of sentiment, style, and imagery, which ought ever to distinguish this high species of poetry. The story is conducted with no small art. The poet goes not back to a tedious recital of the beginning of

the war with Swaran; but hastening to the main action, he falls in exactly, by a most happy coincidence of thought, with the rule of Horace.

> Semper ad eventum festinat, & in medias res,
> Non secus ac notas, auditorem rapit—
> Nec gemino bellum Trojanum orditur ab ovo. De Arte Poet.

He invokes no muse, for he acknowledged none; but his occasional addresses to Malvina have a finer effect than the invocation of any muse. He sets out with no formal proposition of his subject; but the subject naturally and easily unfolds itself; the poem opening in an animated manner, with the situation of Cuthullin, and the arrival of a scout, who informs him of Swaran's landing. Mention is presently made of Fingal, and the expected assistance from the ships of the lonely isle, in order to give further light to the subject. For the poet often shows his address in gradually preparing us for the events he is to introduce; and in particular, the preparation for the appearance of Fingal, the previous expectations that are raised, and the extreme magnificence fully answering these expectations, with which the hero is at length presented to us, are all worked up with such skilful conduct as would do honour to any poet of the most refined times. Homer's art in magnifying the character of Achilles has been universally admired. Ossian certainly shows no less art in aggrandizing Fingal. Nothing could be more happily imagined for this purpose than the whole management of the last battle, wherein Gaul, the son of Morni, had besought Fingal to retire, and to leave him and his other chiefs the honour of the day. The generosity of the king in agreeing to this proposal; the majesty with which he retreats to the hill, from whence he was to behold the engagement, attended by his bards, and waving the lightning of his sword; his perceiving the chiefs overpowered by numbers, but from unwillingness to deprive them of the glory of victory, by coming in person to their assistance, first sending Ullin, the bard, to animate their courage; and, at last, when the danger becomes more pressing, his rising in his

might, and interposing, like a divinity, to decide the doubtful fate of the day; are all circumstances contrived with so much art as plainly discover the Celtic bards to have been not unpractised in heroic poetry.

The story which is the foundation of the Iliad, is in itself as simple as that of Fingal. A quarrel arises between Achilles and Agamemnon concerning a female slave; on which, Achilles, apprehending himself to be injured, withdraws his assistance from the rest of the Greeks. The Greeks fall into great distress, and beseech him to be reconciled to them. He refuses to fight for them in person, but sends his friend Patroclus; and upon his being slain, goes forth to revenge his death, and kills Hector. The subject of Fingal is this: Swaran comes to invade Ireland: Cuthullin, the guardian of the young king, had applied for assistance to Fingal, who reigned in the opposite coast of Scotland. But before Fingal's arrival, he is hurried by rash counsel to encounter Swaran. He is defeated; he retreats; and desponds. Fingal arrives in this conjuncture. The battle is for some time dubious; but in the end he conquers Swaran; and the remembrance of Swaran's being the brother of Agandecca, who had once saved his life, makes him dismiss him honourably. Homer, it is true, has filled up his story with a much greater variety of particulars than Ossian; and in this has shown a compass of invention superior to that of the other poet. But it must not be forgotten, that though Homer be more circumstantial, his incidents, however, are less diversified in kind than those of Ossian. War and bloodshed reign throughout the Iliad: and notwithstanding all the fertility of Homer's invention, there is so much uniformity in his subjects, that there are few readers, who, before the close, are not tired of perpetual fighting. Whereas in Ossian, the mind is relieved by a more agreeable diversity. There is a finer mixture of war and heroism with love and friendship, of martial with tender scenes, than is so be met with, perhaps, in any other poet. The episodes too have great propriety; as natural, and proper to that age and country:

consisting of the songs of bards, which are known to have been the great entertainment of the Celtic heroes in war, as well as in peace. These songs are not introduced at random; if you except the episode of Duchomar and Morna in the first book, which, though beautiful, is more unartful than any of the rest; they have always some particular relation to the actor who is interested, or to the events which are going on; and, whilst they vary the scene, they preserve a sufficient connection with the main subject, by the fitness and propriety of their introduction.

As Fingal's love to Agandecca influences some circumstances of the poem, particularly the honourable dismission of Swaran at the end; it was necessary that we should be let into this part of the hero's story. But as it lay without the compass of the present action, it could be regularly introduced no where, except in an episode. Accordingly the poet, with as much propriety as if Aristotle himself had directed the plan, has contrived an episode, for this purpose, in the song of Carril, at the beginning of the third book.

The conclusion of the poem is strictly according to rule; and is every way noble and pleasing. The reconciliation of the contending heroes, the consolation of Cuthullin, and the general felicity that crowns the action, soothe the mind in a very agreeable manner, and form that passage from agitation and trouble, to perfect quiet and repose, which critics require as the proper termination of the epic work. "Thus they "passed the night in song, and brought back the mor-"ning with joy. Fingal arose on the heath; and shook "his glittering spear in his hand. He moved first to-"wards the plains of Lena; and we followed like a "ridge of fire. Spread the sail, said the king of Mor-"ven, and catch the winds that pour from Lena. We "rose on the wave with songs; and rushed with joy "through the foam of the ocean." So much for the unity and general conduct of the epic action in Fingal.

With regard to that property of the subject which Aristotle requires, that it should be feigned, not his

torical, he must not be understood so strictly, as if he meant to exclude all subjects which have any foundation in truth. For such exclusion would both be unreasonable in itself, and what is more, would be contrary to the practice of Homer, who is known to have founded his Iliad on historical facts concerning the war of Troy, which was famous throughout all Greece. Aristotle means no more than that it is the business of a poet not to be a mere annalist of facts, but to embellish truth with beautiful, probable, and useful fictions; to copy nature, as he himself explains it, like painters, who preserve a likeness, but exhibit their objects more grand and beautiful than they are in reality. That Ossian has followed this course, and building upon true history, has sufficiently adorned it with poetical fiction for aggrandizing his characters and facts, will not, I believe, be questioned by most readers. At the same time, the foundation which those facts and characters had in truth, and the share which the poet himself had in the transactions which he records, must be considered as no small advantage to his work. For truth makes an impression on the mind, far beyond any fiction; and no man, let his imagination be ever so strong, relates any events so feelingly as those in which he has been interested; paints any scene so naturally as one which he has seen; or draws any characters in such strong colours as those which he has personally known. It is considered as an advantage of the epic subject to be taken from a period so distant, as, by being involved in the darkness of tradition, may give licence to fable. Though Ossian's subject may at first view appear unfavourable in this respect, as being taken from his own times, yet when we reflect that he lived to an extreme old age; that he relates what had been transacted in another country, at the distance of many years, and after all that race of men who had been the actors were gone off the stage; we shall find the objection in great measure obviated. In so rude an age, when no written records were known, when tradition was loose, and accuracy of any kind little attended to, what was

great and heroic in one generation, easily ripened into the marvellous in the next.

The natural representation of human characters in an epic poem is highly essential to its merit: and in respect of this, there can be no doubt of Homer's excelling all the heroic poets who have ever wrote. But though Ossian be much inferior to Homer in this article, he will be found to be equal at least, if not superior, to Virgil; and has indeed given all the display of human nature which the simple occurrences of his times could be expected to furnish. No dead uniformity of character prevails in Fingal; but, on the contrary, the principal characters are not only clearly distinguished, but sometimes artfully contrasted, so as to illustrate each other. Ossian's heroes are like Homer's, all brave; but their bravery, like those of Homer's too, is of different kinds. For instance; the prudent, the sedate, the modest, and circumspect Connal, is finely opposed to the presumptuous, rash, overbearing, but gallant and generous Calmar. Calmar hurries Cuthullin into action by his temerity; and when he sees the bad effect of his counsels, he will not survive the disgrace. Connal, like another Ulysses, attends Cuthullin to his retreat, counsels and comforts him under his misfortune. The fierce, the proud, and high-spirited Swaran is admirably contrasted with the calm, the moderate, and generous Fingal. The character of Oscar is a favourite one, throughout the whole poems. The amiable warmth of the young warrior; his eager impetuosity in the day of action; his passion for fame; his submission to his father; his tenderness for Malvina; are the strokes of a masterly pencil: the strokes are few; but it is the hand of nature, and attracts the heart. Ossian's own character, the old man, the hero, and the bard, all in one, presents to us through the whole work a most respectable and venerable figure, which we always contemplate with pleasure. Cuthullin is a hero of the highest class; daring, magnanimous, and exquisitely sensible to honour. We become attached to his interest, and are deeply touched with his distress; and

after the admiration raised for him in the first part of the poem, it is a strong proof of Ossian's masterly genius, that he durst adventure to produce to us another hero, compared with whom, even the great Cuthullin, should be only an inferior personage; and who should rise as far above him, as Cuthullin rises above the rest. Here, indeed, in the character and description of Fingal, Ossian triumphs almost unrivalled: for we may boldly defy all antiquity to shew us any hero equal to Fingal. Homer's Hector possesses several great and amiable qualities; but Hector is a secondary personage in the Iliad, not the hero of the work. We see him only occasionally; we know much less of him than we do of Fingal; who not only in this epic poem, but in Temora, and throughout the rest of Ossian's works, is presented in all that variety of lights, which give the full display of a character. And though Hector faithfully discharges his duty to his country, his friends, and his family, he is tinctured, however, with a degree of the same savage ferocity, which prevails among all the Homeric heroes. For we find him insulting over the fallen Patroclus, with the most cruel taunts, and telling him when he lies in the agony of death, that Achilles cannot help him now; and that in a short time his body, stripped naked, and deprived of funeral honours, shall be devoured by the vultures[p]. Whereas, in the character of Fingal, concur almost all the qualities that can ennoble human nature; that can either make us admire the hero, or love the man. He is not only unconquerable in war, but he makes his people happy by his wisdom in the days of peace. He is truly the Father of his people. He is known by the epithet of "Fingal of the mildest look;" and distinguished on every occasion, by humanity and generosity. He is merciful to his foes[q]; full of affection to his children;

[p] Iliad 16. 830. 11. 17, 127.

[q] When he commands his sons, after Swaran is taken prisoner, "to pursue the rest "of Lochlin, over the heath of Lena, that no vessel may hereafter bound on the dark-"rolling waves of Inistore;" he means not assuredly, as some have misrepresented him, to order a general slaughter of the foe, and to prevent their saving themselves by flight; but like a wise general, he commands his chiefs to render the victory complete, by a total rout of the enemy; that they might adventure no more for the future to fit out any fleet against him or his allies.

full of concern about friends; and never mentions Agandecca, his first love, without the utmost tenderness. He is "the universal protector of the distressed;" "None ever went sad from Fingal."——"O Oscar! "bend the strong in arms; but spare the feeble hand. "Be thou a stream of many tides against the foes of "thy people; but like the gale that moves the grass, "to those that ask thine aid. So Trenmor lived; such "Trathal was, and such has Fingal been. My arm "was the support of the injured; the weak rested be-"hind the lightning of my steel."—These were the maxims of true heroism, to which he formed his grandson. His fame is represented as every where spread; the greatest heroes acknowledge his superiority; his enemies tremble at his name; and the highest encomium that can be bestowed on one whom the poet would most exalt, is to say, that his soul was like the soul of Fingal.

To do justice to the poet's merit, in supposing such a character as this, I must observe, what is not commonly attended to, that there is no part of poetical execution more difficult, than to draw a perfect character in such a manner, as to render it distinct and affecting to the mind. Some strokes of human imperfection and frailty, are what usually give us the most clear view, and the most sensible impression of a character; because they present to us a man, such as we have seen; they recal known features of human nature. When poets attempt to go beyond this range, and describe a faultless hero, they, for the most part, set before us a sort of vague undistinguishable character, such as the imagination cannot lay hold of, or realize to itself, as the object of affection. We know how much Virgil has failed in this particular. His perfect hero, Æneas, is an inanimated insipid personage, whom we may pretend to admire, but whom no one can heartily love. But what Virgil has failed in, Ossian, to our astonishment, has successfully executed. His Fingal, though exhibited without any of the common human failings, is nevertheless a real man; a character which touches

and interests every reader. To this it has much contributed, that the poet has represented him as an old man; and by this has gained the advantage of throwing around him a great many circumstances peculiar to that age, which paint him to the fancy in a more distinct light. He is surrounded with his family; he instructs his children in the principles of virtue; he is narrative of his past exploits; he is venerable with the grey locks of age; he is frequently disposed to moralize, like an old man, on human vanity, and the prospect of death. There is more art, at least more felicity, in this, than may at first be imagined. For youth and old age are the two states of human life, capable of being placed in the most picturesque lights. Middle age is more general and vague, and has fewer circumstances peculiar to the idea of it. And when any object is in a situation that admits it to be rendered particular, and to be clothed with a variety of circumstances, it always stands out more clear and full in poetical description.

Besides human personages, divine or supernatural agents are often introduced into epic poetry; forming what is called the machinery of it; which most critics hold to be an essential part. The marvellous, it must be admitted, has always a great charm for the bulk of readers. It gratifies the imagination, and affords room for striking and sublime description. No wonder, therefore, that all poets should have a strong propensity towards it. But I must observe, that nothing is more difficult than to adjust properly the marvellous with the probable. If a poet sacrifice probability, and fill his work with extravagant supernatural scenes, he spreads over it an appearance of romance and childish fiction; he transports his readers from this world, into a fantastic, visionary region; and loses the weight and dignity which should reign in epic poetry. No work, from which probability is altogether banished, can make a lasting or deep impression. Human actions and manners are always the most interesting objects which can be presented to a human mind. All machinery, there-

fore, is faulty, which withdraws these too much from view, or obscures them under a cloud of incredible fictions. Besides being temperately employed, machinery ought always to have some foundation in popular belief. A poet is by no means at liberty to invent what system of the marvellous he pleases: he must avail himself either of the religious faith, or the superstitious credulity of the country wherein he lives; so as to give an air of probability to events which are most contrary to the common course of nature.

In these respects, Ossian appears to me to have been remarkably happy. He has indeed followed the same course with Homer. For it is perfectly absurd to imagine, as some critics have done, that Homer's mythology was invented by him, in consequence of profound reflections on the benefits it would yield to poetry. Homer was no such refining genius. He found the traditionary stories on which he built his Iliad, mingled with popular legends concerning the intervention of the gods; and he adopted these, because they amused the fancy. Ossian, in like manner, found the tales of his country full of ghosts and spirits: it is likely he believed them himself; and he introduced them, because they gave his poems that solemn and marvellous cast which suited his genius. This was the only machinery he could employ with propriety; because it was the only intervention of supernatural beings, which agreed with the common belief of the country. It was happy; because it did not interfere in the least with the proper display of human characters and actions; because it had less of the incredible than most other kinds of poetical machinery; and because it served to diversify the scene, and to heighten the subject, by an awful grandeur, which is the great design of machinery.

As Ossian's mythology is peculiar to himself, and makes a considerable figure in his other poems, as well as in Fingal, it may be proper to make some observations on it, independent of its subserviency to epic composition. It turns for the most part on the appearances of departed spirits. These, consonantly to the notions

of every rude age, are represented not as purely immaterial, but as thin airy forms, which can be visible or invisible at pleasure; their voice is feeble; their arm is weak; but they are endowed with knowledge more than human. In a separate state, they retain the same dispositions which animated them in this life. They ride on the wind; they bend their airy bows; and pursue deer formed of clouds. The ghosts of departed bards continue to sing. The ghosts of departed heroes frequent the fields of their former fame. "They rest "together in their caves, and talk of mortal men. "Their songs are of other worlds. They come some-"times to the ear of rest, and raise their feeble voice." All this presents to us much the same set of ideas, concerning spirits, as we find in the eleventh book of the Odyssey, where Ulysses visits the regions of the dead: and in the twenty-third book of the Iliad, the ghost of Patroclus, after appearing to Achilles, vanishes precisely like one of Ossian's, emitting a shrill, feeble cry, and melting away like smoke.

But though Homer's and Ossian's ideas concerning ghosts were of the same nature, we cannot but observe that Ossian's ghosts are drawn with much stronger and livelier colours than those of Homer. Ossian describes ghosts with all the particularity of one who had seen and conversed with them, and whose imagination was full of the impression they had left upon it. He calls up those awful and tremendous ideas which the

——Simulacra modis pallentia miris,

are fitted to raise in the human mind; and which, in Shakespeare's style, "harrow up the soul." Crugal's ghost, in particular, in the beginning of the second book of Fingal, may vie with any appearance of this kind, described by any epic or tragic poet whatever. Most poets would have contented themselves with telling us, that he resembled, in every particular, the living Crugal; that his form and dress were the same, only his face more pale and sad; and that he bore the mark of the wound by which he fell. But Ossian sets before

our eyes a spirit from the invisible world, distinguished by all those features which a strong astonished imagination would give to a ghost. " A dark-red stream of " fire comes down from the hill. Crugal sat upon the " beam; he that lately fell by the hand of Swaran, " striving in the battle of heroes. His face is like the " beam of the setting moon. His robes are of the " clouds of the hill. His eyes are like two decaying " flames. Dark is the wound of his breast. The stars " dim-twinkled through his form; and his voice was " like the sound of a distant stream." The circumstance of the stars being beheld, " dim-twinkling thro " his form," is wonderfully picturesque; and conveys the most lively impression of his thin and shadowy substance. The attitude in which he is afterwards placed and the speech put into his mouth, are full of that solemn and awful sublimity which suits the subject " Dim, and in tears, he stood, and stretched his pale " hand over the hero. Faintly he raised his feeble " voice, like the gale of the reedy Lego. My ghost " O Connal! is on my native hills; but my corse i " on the sands of Ullin. Thou shalt never talk with " Crugal, or find his lone steps in the heath. I am ligh " as the blast of Cromla; and I move like the shadow " of mist. Connal, son of Colgar! I see the dark clou " of death. It hovers over the plains of Lena. Th " sons of green Erin shall fall. Remove from the fiel " of ghosts. Like the darkened moon he retired, i " the midst of the whistling blast."

Several other appearances of spirits might be pointe out as among the most sublime passages of Ossian poetry. The circumstances of them are considerabl diversified; and the scenery always suited to the occa sion. " Oscar slowly ascends the hill. The meteo " of night set on the heath before him. A distant to " rent faintly roars. Unfrequent blasts rush throug " aged oaks. The half-enlightened moon sinks di " and red behind her hill. Feeble voices are heard c " the heath. Oscar drew his sword." Nothing c prepare the fancy more happily for the awful scene th

is to follow. "Trenmor came from his hill, at the "voice of his mighty son. A cloud, like the steed of "the stranger, supported his airy limbs. His robe is "of the mist of Lano, that brings death to the people. "His sword is a green meteor half extinguished. His "face is without form, and dark. He sighed thrice "over the hero: and thrice the winds of the night "roared around. Many were his words to Oscar. He "slowly vanished, like a mist that melts on the sunny "hill." To appearances of this kind, we can find no parallel among the Greek or Roman poets. They bring to mind that noble description in the book of Job: "In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep "sleep falleth upon men, fear came upon me, and "trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then "a spirit passed before my face. The hair of my flesh "stood up. It stood still; but I could not discern the "form thereof. An image was before mine eyes. "There was silence; and I heard a voice—Shall mor-"tal man be more just than God?"[7]

As Ossian's supernatural beings are described with a surprising force of imagination, so they are introduced with propriety. We have only three ghosts in Fingal: that of Crugal, which comes to warn the host of impending destruction, and to advise them to save themselves by retreat; that of Everallin, the spouse of Ossian, which calls him to rise and rescue their son from danger; and that of Agandecca, which, just before the last engagement with Swaran, moves Fingal to pity, by mourning for the approaching destruction of her kinsmen and people. In the other poems, ghosts sometimes appear, when invoked, to foretell futurity; frequently, according to the notions of these times, they come as forerunners of misfortune or death to those whom they visit; sometimes they inform their friends at a distance, of their own death; and sometimes they are introduced to heighten the scenery on some great and solemn occasion. "A hundred oaks burn to the "wind; and faint light gleams over the heath. The

[7] Job iv. 13—17.

" ghosts of Ardven pass through the beam; and shew " their dim and distant forms. Comala is half-unseen " on her meteor; and Hidallan is sullen and dim." " The awful faces of other times looked from the clouds " of Crona." " Fercuth! I saw the ghost of night. " Silent he stood on that bank; his robe of mist flew " on the wind. I could behold his tears. An aged " man he seemed, and full of thought."

The ghosts of strangers mingle not with those of the natives. " She is seen; but not like the daughters of " the hill. Her robes are from the strangers land; and " she is still alone." When the ghost of one whom he had formerly known is introduced, the propriety of the living character is still preserved. This is remarkable in the appearance of Calmar's ghost, in the poem intituled, The Death of Cuthullin. He seems to forebode Cuthullin's death, and to beckon him to his cave. Cuthullin reproaches him for supposing that he could be intimidated by such prognostics. " Why dost thou " bend thy dark eyes on me, ghost of the car-borne " Calmar! Wouldst thou frighten me, O Matha's son! " from the battles of Cormac? Thy hand was not fee- " ble in war; neither was thy voice for peace. How " art thou changed, chief of Lara! if now thou dost " advise to fly! Retire thou to thy cave: thou art not " Calmar's ghost: He delighted in battle; and his arm " was like the thunder of heaven." Calmar makes no return to this seeming reproach: but, " he retired in " his blast with joy; for he had heard the voice of his " praise." This is precisely the ghost of Achilles in Homer; who, notwithstanding all the dissatisfaction he expresses with his state in the region of the dead, as soon as he had heard his son Neoptolemus praised for his gallant behaviour, strode away with silent joy to rejoin the rest of the shades[s].

It is a great advantage of Ossian's mythology, that it is not local and temporary, like that of most other ancient poets; which of course is apt to seem ridiculous, after the superstitions have passed away on which it

[s] Odyss. lib. 11.

was founded. Ossian's mythology is, to speak so, the mythology of human nature; for it is founded on what has been the popular belief, in all ages and countries, and under all forms of religion, concerning the appearances of departed spirits. Homer's machinery is always lively and amusing; but far from being always supported with proper dignity. The indecent squabbles among his gods, surely do no honour to epic poetry. Whereas Ossian's machinery has dignity upon all occasions. It is indeed a dignity of the dark and awful kind: but this is proper; because coincident with the strain and spirit of the poetry. A light and gay mythology, like Homer's, would have been perfectly unsuitable to the subjects on which Ossian's genius was employed. But though his machinery be always solemn, it is not, however, always dreary or dismal; it is enlivened as much as the subject would permit, by those pleasant and beautiful appearances, which he sometimes introduces, of the spirits of the hill. These are gentle spirits; descending on sun-beams; fair-moving on the plain; their forms white and bright; their voices sweet; and their visits to men propitious. The greatest praise that can be given to the beauty of a living woman, is to say, "She is fair as the ghost of the hill; "when it moves in a sun-beam at noon, over the si- "lence of Morven."—"The hunter shall hear my voice "from his booth. He shall fear, but love my voice. "For sweet shall my voice be for my friends; for "pleasant were they to me."

Besides ghosts, or the spirits of departed men, we find in Ossian some instances of other kinds of machinery. Spirits of a superior nature to ghosts are sometimes alluded to, which have power to embroil the deep; to call forth winds and storms, and pour them on the land of the stranger; to overturn forests, and to send death among the people. We have prodigies too; a shower of blood; and when some disaster is befalling at a distance, the sound of death heard on the strings of Ossian's harp: all perfectly consonant, not only to the peculiar ideas of northern nations, but to

the general current of a superstitious imagination in all countries. The description of Fingal's airy hall, in the poem called Berrathon, and of the ascent of Malvina into it, deserves particular notice, as remarkably noble and magnificent. But above all, the engagement of Fingal with the spirit of Loda, in Carric-thura, cannot be mentioned without admiration. I forbear transcribing the passage, as it must have drawn the attention of every one who has read the works of Ossian. The undaunted courage of Fingal, opposed to all the terrors of the Scandinavian god; the appearance and the speech of that awful spirit; the wound which he receives, and the shriek which he sends forth, "as rolled "into himself, he rose upon the wind;" are full of the most amazing and terrible majesty. I know no passage more sublime in the writings of any uninspired author. The fiction is calculated to aggrandize the hero, which it does to a high degree; nor is it so unnatural or wild a fiction, as might at first be thought. According to the notions of those times, supernatural beings were material, and consequently vulnerable. The spirit of Loda was not acknowledged as a deity by Fingal; he did not worship at the stone of his power; he plainly considered him as the god of his enemies only; as a local deity, whose dominion extended no farther than to the regions where he was worshipped; who had, therefore, no title to threaten him, and no claim to his submission. We know there are poetical precedents of great authority for fictions fully as extravagant; and if Homer be forgiven for making Diomed attack and wound in battle the gods whom that chief himself worshipped, Ossian surely is pardonable for making his hero superior to the god of a foreign territory.

† The scene of this encounter, of Fingal with the spirit of Loda, is laid in Inistore or the islands of Orkney; and in the description of Fingal's landing there, it is said "A rock bends along the coast, with all its echoing wood." On "the top is the circle of Loda, with the mossy stone of power." In confirmation of Ossian's topography, it is proper to acquaint the reader, that in these islands, as I have been well informed, there are many pillars and circles of stones, still remaining, known by the names of the temples and circles of Loda, or Loden; to which some degree of superstitious regard is annexed to this day. These islands, until the year 1468, made a part of the Danish dominions. Their ancient language, of which there are yet some remains among the natives, is called the Norse; and is a dialect, not of the Celtic, but

Notwithstanding the poetical advantages which I have ascribed to Ossian's machinery, I acknowledge it would have been much more beautiful and perfect, had the author discovered some knowledge of a Supreme Being. Although his silence on this head has been accounted for by the learned and ingenious translator, in a very probable manner, yet still it must be held a considerable disadvantage to the poetry. For the most august and lofty ideas that can embellish poetry, are derived from the belief of a divine administration of the universe: and hence the invocation of a Supreme Being, or at least of some superior powers, who are conceived as presiding over human affairs, the solemnities of religious worship, prayers preferred, and assistance implored on critical occasions, appear with great dignity in the works of almost all poets, as chief ornaments of their compositions. The absence of all such religious ideas from Ossian's poetry, is a sensible blank in it: the more to be regretted, as we can easily imagine what an illustrious figure they would have made under the management of such a genius as his; and how finely they would have been adapted to many situations which occur in his works.

After so particular an examination of Fingal, it were needless to enter into as full a discussion of the conduct of Temora, the other epic poem. Many of the same observations, especially with regard to the great characteristics of heroic poetry, apply to both. The high merit, however, of Temora, requires that we should not pass it by without some remarks.

The scene of Temora, as of Fingal, is laid in Ireland; and the action is of a posterior date. The subject is, an expedition of the hero, to dethrone and punish a bloody usurper, and to restore the possession of the kingdom to the posterity of the lawful prince; an undertaking worthy the justice and heroism of the great

of the Scandinavian tongue. The manners and the superstitions of the inhabitants, are quite distinct from those of the Highlands and western isles of Scotland. Their ancient songs too, are of a different strain and character, turning upon magical incantations and evocations from the dead, which were the favourite subjects of the old Runic poetry. They have many traditions among them of wars, in former times, with the inhabitants of the western islands.

Fingal. The action is one and complete. The poem opens with the descent of Fingal on the coast, and the consultation held among the chiefs of the enemy. The murder of the young prince Cormac, which was the cause of the war, being antecedent to the epic action, is introduced with great propriety, as an episode in the first book. In the progress of the poem, three battles are described, which rise in their importance above one another; the success is various, and the issue for some time doubtful; till at last, Fingal, brought into distress by the wound of his great general Gaul, and the death of his son Fillan, assumes the command himself, and having slain the Irish king in single combat, restores the rightful heir to his throne.

Temora has, perhaps, less fire than the other epic poem; but in return, it has more variety, more tenderness, and more magnificence. The reigning idea so often presented to us of "Fingal in the last of his "fields," is venerable and affecting; nor could any more noble conclusion be thought of, than the aged hero, after so many successful atchievements, taking his leave of battles, and with all the solemnities of those times, resigning his spear to his son. The events are less crowded in Temora than in Fingal; actions and characters are more particularly displayed; we are let into the transactions of both hosts; and informed of the adventures of the night, as well as of the day. The still pathetic, and the romantic scenery of several of the night adventures, so remarkably suited to Ossian's genius, occasion a fine diversity in the poem; and are happily contrasted with the military operations of the day.

In most of our author's poems, the horrors of war are softened by intermixed scenes of love and friendship. In Fingal, these are introduced as episodes; in Temora, we have an incident of this nature wrought into the body of the piece; in the adventure of Cathmor and Sul-malla. This forms one of the most conspicuous beauties of that poem. The distress of Sulmalla, disguised and unknown among strangers, her

tender and anxious concern for the safety of Cathmor, her dream, and her melting remembrance of the land of her fathers; Cathmor's emotion when he first discovers her, his struggles to conceal and suppress his passion, lest it should unman him in the midst of war, though "his soul poured forth in secret, when he be-"held her fearful eye;" and the last interview between them, when, overcome by her tenderness, he lets her know he had discovered her, and confesses his passion; are all wrought up with the most exquisite sensibility and delicacy.

Besides the characters which appeared in Fingal, several new ones are here introduced: and though, as they are all the characters of warriors, bravery is the predominant feature, they are nevertheless diversified in a sensible and striking manner. Foldath, for instance, the general of Cathmor, exhibits the perfect picture of a savage chieftain: bold and daring, but presumptuous, cruel, and overbearing. He is distinguished, on his first appearance, as the friend of the tyrant Cairbar; "His stride is haughty, his red eye rolls in "wrath." In his person and whole deportment, he is contrasted with the mild and wise Hidalla, another leader of the same army, on whose humanity and gentleness he looks with great contempt. He professedly delights in strife and blood. He insults over the fallen. He is impervious in his counsels, and factious when they are not followed. He is unrelenting in all his schemes of revenge, even to the length of denying the funeral song to the dead; which, from the injury thereby done to the ghosts, was in those days considered as the greatest barbarity. Fierce to the last, he comforts himself in his dying moments, with thinking that his ghost shall often leave its blast to rejoice over the graves of those he had slain. Yet Ossian, ever prone to the pathetic, has contrived to throw into his account of the death even of this man, some tender circumstances, by the moving description of his daughter Dardu-lena, the last of his race.

The character of Foldath tends much to exalt that of Cathmor, the chief commander, which is distinguished by the most humane virtues. He abhors all fraud and cruelty, is famous for his hospitality to strangers; open to every generous sentiment, and to every soft and compassionate feeling. He is so amiable as to divide the reader's attachment between him and the hero of the poem; though our author has artfully managed it so, as to make Cathmor himself indirectly acknowledge Fingal's superiority, and to appear somewhat apprehensive of the event, after the death of Fillan, which he knew would call forth Fingal in all his might. It is very remarkable, that although Ossian has introduced into his poems three complete heroes, Cuthullin, Cathmor, and Fingal, he has, however, sensibly distinguished each of their characters. Cuthullin is particularly honourable; Cathmor particulary amiable; Fingal wise and great, retaining an ascendant peculiar to himself, in whatever light he is viewed.

But the favourite figure in Temora, and the one most highly finished, is Fillan. His character is of that sort, for which Ossian shews a particular fondness; an eager, fervent young warrior, fired with all the impatient enthusiasm for military glory, peculiar to that time of life. He had sketched this in the description of his own son Oscar; but as he has extended it more fully in Fillan, and as the character is so consonant to the epic strain, though, so far as I remember, not placed in such a conspicuous light by any other epic poet, it may be worth while to attend a little to Ossian's management of it in this instance.

Fillan was the youngest of all the sons of Fingal; younger, it is plain, than his nephew Oscar, by whose fame and great deeds in war, we may naturally suppose his ambition to have been highly stimulated. Withal, as he is younger, he is described as more rash and fiery. His first appearance is soon after Oscar's death, when he was employed to watch the motions of the foe by night. In a conversation with his brother Ossian, on that occasion, we learn that it was not long

since he began to lift the spear. "Few are the marks "of my sword in battle; but my soul is fire." He is with some difficulty restrained by Ossian from going to attack the enemy; and complains to him that his father had never allowed him any opportunity of signalizing his valour. "The king hath not remarked my "sword; I go forth with the crowd; I return without "my fame." Soon after, when Fingal, according to custom, was to appoint one of his chiefs to command the army, and each was standing forth, and putting in his claim to this honour, Fillan is presented in the following most picturesque and natural attitude: "On "his spear stood the son of Clatho, in the wandering "of his locks. Thrice he raised his eyes on Fingal; "his voice thrice failed him as he spoke. Fillan could "not boast of battles; at once he strode away. Bent "over a distant stream he stood; the tear hung in his "eye. He struck, at times, the thistle's head with "his inverted spear." No less natural and beautiful is the description of Fingal's paternal emotion on this occasion. "Nor is he unseen of Fingal. Side-long he "beheld his son. He beheld him with bursting joy. "He hid the big tear with his locks, and turned a-"midst his crowded soul." The command, for that day, being given to Gaul, Fillan rushes amidst the thickest of the foe, saves Gaul's life, who is wounded by a random arrow, and distinguishes himself so in battle, that "the days of old return on Fingal's "mind, as he beholds the renown of his son. As the "sun rejoices from the cloud, over the tree his beams "have raised, whilst it shakes its lonely head on the "heath, so joyful is the king over Fillan." Sedate, however, and wise, he mixes the praise which he bestows on him with some reprehension of his rashness. "My son, I saw thy deeds, and my soul was glad. "Thou art brave, son of Clatho, but headlong in the "strife. So did not Fingal advance, though he never "feared a foe. Let thy people be a ridge behind thee; "they are thy strength in the field. Then shalt thou "be long renowned, and behold the tombs of thy fa-"thers."

On the next day, the greatest and the last of Fillan's life, the charge is committed to him of leading on the host to battle. Fingal's speech to his troops on this occasion, is full of noble sentiment; and where he recommends his son to their care, extremely touching "A young beam is before you, few are his steps to "war. They are few, but he is valiant; defend my "dark-haired son. Bring him back with joy; here- "after he may stand alone. His form is like his fa- "thers; his soul is a flame of their fire." When the battle begins, the poet puts forth his strength to describe the exploits of the young hero, who, at last encountering and killing with his own hand Foldath, the opposite general, attains the pinnacle of glory. In what follows, when the fate of Fillan is drawing near, Ossian if any where, excels himself. Foldath being slain, and a general rout begun, there was no resource left to the enemy but in the great Cathmor himself, who in this extremity descends from the hill, where, according to the custom of those princes, he surveyed the battle. Observe how this critical event is wrought up by the poet. "Wide spreading over echoing Lubar, the flight "of Bolga is rolled along. Fillan hung forward on "their steps; and strewed the heath with dead. Fin- "gal rejoiced over his son. Blue-shielded Cathmor "rose. Son of Alpin, bring the harp! Give Fillan's "praise to the wind: raise high his praise in my hall "while yet he shines in war. Leave, blue-eyed Cla- "tho! leave thy hall! behold that early beam of thine! "The host is withered in its course. No farther look— "it is dark—light-trembling from the harp, strike "virgins! strike the sound." The sudden interruption, and suspense of the narration on Cathmor's rising from his hill, the abrupt bursting into the praise of Fillan, and the passionate apostrophe to his mother Clatho, are admirable efforts of poetical art, in order to interest us in Fillan's danger; and the whole is heightened by the immediately following simile, one of the most magnificent and sublime that is to be met with in any poet, and which if it had been found in Homer

would have been the frequent subject of admiration to critics: "Fillan is like a spirit of heaven, that de- "scends from the skirt of his blast. The troubled "ocean feels his steps, as he strides from wave to wave. "His path kindles behind him; islands shake their "heads on the heaving seas."

But the poet's art is not yet exhausted. The fall of this noble young warrior, or in Ossian's style, the extinction of this beam of heaven, could not be rendered too interesting and affecting. Our attention is naturally drawn towards Fingal. He beholds from his hill the rising of Cathmor and the danger of his son. But what shall he do: "Shall Fingal rise to his aid, and take the sword of Luno? "What then should become of thy fame, son of white- "bosomed Clatho? Turn not thine eyes from Fingal, "daughter of Inistore! I shall not quench thy early "beam. No cloud of mine shall rise, my son, upon "thy soul of fire." Struggling between concern for the fame, and fear for the safety of his son, he withdraws from the sight of the engagement; and dispatches Ossian in haste to the field, with this affectionate and delicate injunction. "Father of Oscar!" addressing him by a title which on this occasion has the highest propriety, "Father of Oscar! lift the spear; defend "the young in arms. But conceal thy steps from Fil- "lan's eyes: He must not know that I doubt his "steel." Ossian arrived too late. But unwilling to describe Fillan vanquished, the poet suppresses all the circumstances of the combat with Cathmor; and only shews us the dying hero. We see him animated to the end with the same martial and ardent spirit; breathing his last in bitter regret for being so early cut off from the field of glory. "Ossian, lay me in that hol- "low rock. Raise no stone above me; lest one should "ask about my fame. I am fallen in the first of my "fields; fallen without renown. Let thy voice alone "send joy to my flying soul. Why should the bard "know where dwells the early fallen Fillan?" He who after tracing the circumstances of this story, shall deny that our bard is possessed of high sentiment, and

high art, must be strangely prejudiced indeed. Let him read the story of Pallas in Virgil, which is of a similar kind; and after all the praise he may justly bestow on the elegant and finished description of that amiable author, let him say, which of the two poets unfold most of the human soul. I wave insisting on any more of the particulars in Temora; as my aim is rather to lead the reader into the genius and spirit of Ossian's poetry than to dwell on all his beauties.

The judgment and art discovered in conducting works of such length as Fingal and Temora, distinguish them from the other poems in this collection. The smaller pieces, however, contain particular beauties no less eminent. They are historical poems, generally of the elegiac kind; and plainly discover themselves to be the work of the same author. One consistent face of manners is every where presented to us; one spirit of poetry reigns; the masterly hand of Ossian appears throughout; the same rapid and animated style; the same strong colouring of imagination, and the same glowing sensibility of heart. Besides the unity which belongs to the compositions of one man, there is moreover a certain unity of subject which very happily connects all these poems. They form the poetical history of the age of Fingal. The same race of heroes, whom we have met with in the greater poems, Cuthullin, Oscar, Cormal, and Gaul, return again upon the stage; and Fingal himself is always the principal figure, presented on every occasion, with equal magnificence, nay, rising upon us to the last. The circumstances of Ossian's old age and blindness, his surviving all his friends, and his relating their great exploits to Malvina, the spouse or mistress of his beloved son Oscar, furnish the finest poetical situations that fancy could devise for that tender pathetic which reigns in Ossian's poetry.

On each of these poems, there might be room for separate observations, with regard to the conduct and disposition of the incidents, as well as to the beauty of the description and sentiments. Carthon is a regular and highly finished piece. The main story is very pr

perly introduced by Clessammor's relation of the adventure of his youth; and this introduction is finely heightened by Fingal's song of mourning over Moina; in which Ossian, ever fond of doing honour to his father, has contrived to distinguish him, for being an eminent poet, as well as warrior. Fingal's song upon this occasion, "when his thousand bards leaned forwards from "their seats, to hear the voice of the king," is inferior to no passage in the whole book: and with great judgment put in his mouth, as the seriousness, no less than the sublimity of the strain, is peculiarly suited to the hero's character. In Darthula, are assembled almost all the tender images that can touch the heart of man; friendship, love, the affections of parents, sons, and brothers, the distress of the aged, and the unavailing bravery of the young. The beautiful address to the moon, with which the poem opens, and the transition from thence to the subject, most happily prepare the mind for that train of affecting events that is to follow. The story is regular, dramatic, interesting, to the last. He who can read it without emotion, may congratulate himself, if he pleases, upon being completely armed against sympathetic sorrow. As Fingal had no occasion of appearing in the action of this poem, Ossian makes a very artful transition from his narration, to what was passing in the halls of Selma. The sound heard there on the strings of his harp, the concern which Fingal shows on hearing it, and the invocation of the ghosts of their fathers to receive the heroes falling in a distant land, are introduced with great beauty of imagination, to increase the solemnity, and to diversify the scenery of the poem.

Carric-thura is full of the most sublime dignity; and has this advantage of being more cheerful in the subject, and more happy in the catastrophe than most of the other poems: Though tempered at the same time with episodes in that strain of tender melancholy which seems to have been the great delight of Ossian and the bards of his age. Lathmon is peculiarly distinguished by high generosity of sentiment. This is carried so far,

particularly in the refusal of Gaul, on one side, to take the advantage of a sleeping foe; and of Lathmon, on the other, to overpower by numbers the two young warriors, as to recal into one's mind the manners of chivalry; some resemblance to which may perhaps be suggested by other incidents in this collection of poems. Chivalry, however, took rise in an age and country too remote from those of Ossian to admit the suspicion that the one could have borrowed any thing from the other. So far as chivalry had any real existence, the same military enthusiasm, which gave birth to it in the feudal times, might, in the days of Ossian, that is, in the infancy of a rising state, through the operation of the same cause, very naturally produce effects of the same kind on the minds and manners of men. So far as chivalry was an ideal system existing only in romance, it will not be thought surprising, when we reflect on the account before given of the Celtic bards, that this imaginary refinement of heroic manners should be found among them, as much, at least, as among the Trobadores, or strolling provencial bards, in the 10th or 11th century whose songs, it is said, first gave rise to those romantic ideas of heroism, which for so long a time inchanted Europe[u]. Ossian's heroes have all the gallantry and generosity of those fabulous knights without their extravagance; and his love-scenes have native tenderness without any mixture of those forced and unnatural conceits which abound in the old romances. The adventures related by our poet, which resemble the most those of romance, concern women who follow their lovers to war, disguised in the armour of men; and these are so managed, as to produce, in the discovery, several of the most interesting situations: one beautiful instance of which may be seen in Carric-thura, and another in Calthon and Colmal.

Oithona presents a situation of a different nature. In the absence of her lover Gaul, she had been carried off and ravished by Dunrommath. Gaul discovers the place where she is kept concealed, and comes to re-

[u] Vide Huetius de origine fabularum Romanensium.

venge her. The meeting of the two lovers, the sentiments and the behaviour of Oithona on that occasion, are described with such tender and exquisite propriety, as does the greatest honour both to the art and to the delicacy of our author: and would have been admired in any poet of the most refined age. The conduct of Croma must strike every reader, as remarkably judicious and beautiful. We are to be prepared for the death of Malvina, which is related in the succeeding poem. She is therefore introduced in person; "she has heard "a voice in a dream, she feels the fluttering of her "soul;" and in a most moving lamentation addressed to her beloved Oscar, she sings her own death-song. Nothing could be calculated with more art to soothe and comfort her, than the story which Ossian relates. In the young and brave Fovar-gormo, another Oscar is introduced, his praises are sung; and the happiness is set before her of those who die in their youth, "when "their renown is around them; before the feeble be-"hold them in the hall, and smile at their trembling "hands."

But nowhere does Ossian's genius appear to greater advantage, than in Berrathon, which is reckoned the conclusion of his songs, "The last sound of the voice "of Cona."

> Qualis olor noto positurus littore vitam,
> Ingemit, et mæstis mulcens consentibus auras
> Præsago queritur venientia funera cantu.

The whole train of ideas is admirably suited to the subject. Every thing is full of that invisible world, into which the aged bard believes himself now ready to enter. The airy hall of Fingal presents itself to his view; "he sees the cloud that shall receive his ghost; "he beholds the mist that shall form his robe when he "appears on his hill;" and all the natural objects around him seem to carry the presages of death. "The thistle "shakes its beard to the wind. The flower hangs its "heavy head—it seems to say, I am covered with the "drops of heaven; the time of my departure is near, "and the blast that shall scatter my leaves." Malvi-

na's death is hinted to him in the most delicate manner by the son of Alpin. His lamentation over her, her apotheosis, or ascent to the habitation of heroes, and the introduction to the story which follows from the mention which Ossian supposes the father of Malvina to make of him in the hall of Fingal, are all in the highest spirit of poetry. "And dost thou remember "Ossian, O Toscar, son of Conloch? The battles of "your youth were many; our swords went together "to the field." Nothing could be more proper than to end his song with recording an exploit of the father of that Malvina, of whom his heart was now so full; and who, from first to last, had been such a favourite object throughout all his poems.

The scene of most of Ossian's poems is laid in Scotland, or in the coast of Ireland, opposite to the territories of Fingal. When the scene is in Ireland, we perceive no change of manners from those of Ossian's native country. For as Ireland was undoubtedly peopled with Celtic tribes, the language, customs, and religion of both nations were the same. They had been separated from one another by migration, only a few generations, as it should seem, before our poet's age; and they still maintained a close and frequent intercourse. But when the poet relates any of the expeditions of any of his heroes to the Scandinavian coast, or to the islands of Orkney, which were then part of the Scandinavian territory, as he does in Carric-thura, Sumalla of Lumon, and Cath-loda, the case is quite altered. Those countries were inhabited by nations of the Teutonic descent, who, in their manners and religious rites, differed widely from the Celtæ; and it is curious and remarkable, to find this difference clearly pointed out in the Poems of Ossian. His descriptions bear the native marks of one who was present in the expeditions which he relates, and who describes what he has seen with his own eyes. No sooner are we carried to Lochlin, or the islands of Inistore, than we perceive that we are in a foreign region. New objects begin to appear. We meet every where with the stones and

circles of Loda, that is, Odin, the great Scandinavian deity. We meet with the divinations and inchantments, for which it is well known those northern nations were early famous. "There, mixed with the 'murmur of waters, rose the voice of aged men, who 'called the forms of night to aid them in their war;" whilst the Caledonian chiefs who assisted them, are described as standing at a distance, heedless of their rites. That ferocity of manners which distinguished those nations, also becomes conspicuous. In the combats of their chiefs, there is a peculiar savageness; even their women are bloody and fierce. The spirit, and the very ideas of Regner Lodbrog, that northern scalder whom I formerly quoted, occur to us again. "The "hawks," Ossian makes one of the Scandinavian chiefs say, "rush from all their winds: they are wont to "trace my course. We rejoiced three days above the "dead, and called the hawks of heaven. They came "from all their winds to feast on the foes of Annir."

Dismissing now the separate consideration of any of our author's works, I proceed to make some observations on his manner of writing, under the general heads of Description, Imagery, and Sentiment.

A poet of original genius is always distinguished by his talent for description[r]. A second rate writer discerns nothing new or peculiar in the object he means to describe. His conceptions of it are vague and loose; his expressions feeble; and of course the object is presented to us indistinctly, and as through a cloud. But a true poet makes us imagine that we see it before our eyes: he catches the distinguishing features; he gives it the colours of life and reality; he places it in such a light, that a painter could copy after him. The happy talent is chiefly owing to a lively imagination, which first receives a strong impression of the object; and then, by a proper selection of capital picturesque circumstances employed in describing it, transmits that impression in its full force to the imagination of others.

[r] See the rules of poetical description, excellently illustrated by Lord Kaimes, in his Elements of Criticism, vol. iii. chap. 21. Of Narration and Description.

That Ossian possesses this descriptive power in a high degree, we have a clear proof from the effect which his descriptions produce upon the imaginations of those who read him with any degree of attention and taste. Few poets are more interesting. We contract an intimate acquaintance with his principal heroes. The characters, the manners, the face of the country, become familiar; we even think we could draw the figure of his ghosts: in a word, whilst reading him, we are transported as into a new region, and dwelling among his objects, as if they were all real.

It were easy to point out several instances of exquisite painting in the works of our author. Such, for instance, as the scenery with which Temora opens, and the attitude in which Cairbar is there presented to us; the description of the young prince Cormac, in the same book; and the ruins of Balclutha in Carthon. "I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were "desolate. The fire had resounded in the halls, and "the voice of the people is heard no more. The stream "of Clutha was removed from its place by the fall of "the walls. The thistle shook there its lonely head; "the moss whistled to the wind. The fox looked out "from the windows; the rank grass of the wall waved "round his head. Desolate is the dwelling of Moina, "and silence is in the house of her fathers." Nothing also can be more natural and lively than the manner in which Carthon afterwards describes how the conflagration of his city affected him when a child: "Have "I not seen the fallen Balclutha? And shall I feast "with Comhal's son? Comhal! who threw his fire in "the midst of my father's hall! I was young, and knew "not the cause why the virgins wept. The columns "of smoke pleased mine eye, when they rose above "my walls; I often looked back with gladness, when "my friends fled above the hill. But when the years "of my youth came on, I beheld the moss of my fallen walls. My sigh arose with the morning; and "my tears descended with night. Shall I not fight, I "said to my soul, against the children of my foes

"and I will fight, O bard! I feel the strength of my "soul." In the same poem, the assembling of the chiefs round Fingal, who had been warned of some impending danger by the appearance of a prodigy, is described with so many picturesque circumstances, that one imagines himself present in the assembly. "The "king alone beheld the terrible sight, and he foresaw "the death of his people. He came in silence to his "hall, and took his father's spear; the mail rattled on "his breast. The heroes rose around. They looked "in silence on each other, marking the eyes of Fingal. "They saw the battle in his face. A thousand shields "are placed at once on their arms; and they drew a "thousand swords. The hall of Selma brightened a-"round. The clang of arms ascends. The grey dogs "howl in their place. No word is among the mighty "chiefs. Each marked the eyes of the king; and half "assumed his spear."

It has been objected to Ossian, that his descriptions of military actions are imperfect, and much less diversified by circumstances than those of Homer. This is in some measure true. The amazing fertility of Homer's invention is no where so much displayed as in the incidents of his battles, and in the little history pieces he gives of the persons slain. Nor indeed, with regard to the talent of description, can too much be said in praise of Homer. Every thing is alive in his writings. The colours with which he paints are those of nature. But Ossian's genius was of a different kind from Homer's. It led him to hurry towards grand objects rather than to amuse himself with particulars of less importance. He could dwell on the death of a favourite hero: but that of a private man seldom stopped his rapid course. Homer's genius was more comprehensive than Ossian's. It included a wider circle of objects; and could work up any incident into description. Ossian's was more limited; but the region within which it chiefly exerted itself was the highest of all, the region of the pathetic and sublime.

We must not imagine, however, that Ossian's battles consist only of general indistinct description. Such beautiful incidents are sometimes introduced, and the circumstances of the persons slain, so much diversified, as show that he could have embellished his military scenes with an abundant variety of particulars, if his genius had led him to dwell upon them. "One man "is stretched in the dust of his native land; he fell, "where often he had spread the feast, and often raised "the voice of the harp." The maid of Inistore is introduced, in a moving apostrophe, as weeping for another; and a third, "as rolled in the dust, he lifted "his faint eyes to the king," is remembered and mourned by Fingal as the friend of Agandecca. The blood pouring from the wound of one who is slain by night, is heard "hissing on the half-extinguished oak," which had been kindled for giving light: another climbing a tree to escape from his foe, is pierced by his spear from behind; "shrieking, panting he fell; whilst moss "and withered branches pursue his fall, and strew the blue arms of Gaul." Never was a finer picture drawn of the ardour of two youthful warriors than the following: "I saw Gaul in his armour, and my soul was "mixed with his: for the fire of the battle was in his "eyes; he looked to the foe with joy. We spoke the "words of friendship in secret; and the lightning of "our swords poured together. We drew them behind "the wood, and tried the strength of our arms on the "empty air."

Ossian is always concise in his descriptions, which adds much to their beauty and force. For it is a great mistake to imagine, that a crowd of particulars, or a very full and extended style, is of advantage to description. On the contrary, such a diffuse manner for the most part weakens it. Any one redundant circumstance is a nuisance. It encumbers and loads the fancy, and renders the main image indistinct. "Obstat," as Quintilian says with regard to style, "quicquid non "adjuvat." To be concise in description, is one thing; and to be general, is another. No description that

rests in generals can possibly be good; it can convey no lively idea; for it is of particulars only that we have a distinct conception. But at the same time, no strong imagination dwells long upon any one particular; or heaps together a mass of trivial ones. By the happy choice of some one, or of a few that are the most striking, it presents the image more complete, shows us more at one glance, than a feeble imagination is able to do, by turning its object round and round into a variety of lights. Tacitus is of all prose writers the most concise. He has even a degree of abruptness resembling our author: yet no writer is more eminent for lively description. When Fingal, after having conquered the haughty Swaran, proposes to dismiss him with honour: "Raise to-morrow thy white sails to the "wind, thou brother of Agandecca!" he conveys, by thus addressing his enemy, a stronger impression of the emotions then passing within his mind, than if whole paragraphs had been spent in describing the conflict between resentment against Swaran, and the tender remembrance of his ancient love. No amplification is needed to give us the most full idea of a hardy veteran, after the few following words: "His shield is marked "with the strokes of battle; his red eye despises dan-"ger." When Oscar, left alone, was surrounded by foes, "he stood," it is said, "growing in his place, "like the flood of the narrow vale;" a happy representation of one, who by daring intrepidity in the midst of danger, seems to increase in his appearance, and becomes more formidable every moment, like the sudden rising of the torrent hemmed in by the valley. And a whole crowd of ideas, concerning the circumstances of domestic sorrow occasioned by a young warrior's first going forth to battle, is poured upon the mind by these words: "Calmar leaned on his father's spear; "that spear which he brought from Lara's hall, when "the soul of his mother was sad."

The conciseness of Ossian's descriptions is the more proper on account of his subjects. Descriptions of gay and smiling scenes may, without any disadvantage, be

amplified and prolonged. Force is not the predominan quality expected in these. The description may b weakened by being diffuse, yet, notwithstanding, ma be beautiful still. Whereas, with respect to grand, so lemn, and pathetic subjects, which are Ossian's chie field, the case is very different. In these, energy i above all things required. The imagination must b seized at once, or not at all; and is far more deepl impressed by one strong and ardent image, than by th anxious minuteness of laboured illustration.

But Ossian's genius, though chiefly turned toward the sublime and pathetic, was not confined to it: i subjects also of grace and delicacy, he discovers th hand of a master. Take for an example the followin elegant description of Agandecca, wherein the tender nèss of Tibullus seems united with the majesty of Vir gil. "The daughter of snow overheard, and left th "hall of her secret sigh. She came in all her beauty "like the moon from the cloud of the east. Lovelines "was around her as light. Her steps were like th "music of songs. She saw the youth and loved hin "He was the stolen sigh of her soul. Her blue eye "rolled on him in secret: and she blest the chief "Morven." Several other instances might be produc ed of the feelings of love and friendship painted by ou author with a most natural and happy delicacy.

The simplicity of Ossian's manner adds great beaut to his descriptions, and indeed to his whole poetry We meet with no affected ornaments; no forced refine ment, no marks either in style or thought of a studie endeavour to shine and sparkle. Ossian appears ever where to be prompted by his feelings: and to spea from the abundance of his heart. I remember no mo than one instance of what can be called quaint thoug in the whole collection of his works. It is in the fir book of Fingal, where, from the tombs of two lover two lonely yews are mentioned to have sprung, "whos "branches wished to meet on high." This sympath of the trees with the lovers, may be reckoned to bo der on an Italian conceit: and it is somewhat curio

to find this single instance of that sort of wit in our Celtic poetry.

The "joy of grief," is one of Ossian's remarkable expressions, several times repeated. If any one shall think that it needs to be justified by a precedent, he may find it twice used by Homer; in the Iliad, when Achilles is visited by the ghost of Patroclus; and in the Odyssey, when Ulysses meets his mother in the shades. On both these occasions, the heroes, melted with tenderness, lament their not having it in their power to throw their arms round the ghost, "that we "might," say they, "in a mutual embrace, enjoy the "delight of grief."

——χρυεροιο τεταρπομεσθα γοοιο.[1]

But in truth the expression stands in need of no defence from authority; for it is a natural and just expression; and conveys a clear idea of that gratification which a virtuous heart often feels in the indulgence of a tender melancholy. Ossian makes a very proper distinction between this gratification, and the destructive effect of overpowering grief. "There is a joy in grief, "when peace dwells in the breast of the sad. But sor- "row wastes the mournful, O daughter of Toscar, and "their days are few." To "give the joy of grief," generally signifies to raise the strain of soft and grave music; and finely characterizes the taste of Ossian's age and country. In those days, when the songs of bards were the great delight of heroes, the tragic muse was held in chief honour; gallant actions, and virtuous sufferings, were the chosen theme; preferable to that light and trifling strain of poetry and music, which promotes light and trifling manners, and serves to emasculate the mind. "Strike the harp in my hall," said the great Fingal in the midst of youth and victory, "Strike "the harp in my hall, and let Fingal hear the song. "Pleasant is the joy of grief! It is like the shower of "spring, when it softens the branch of the oak; and "the young leaf lifts its green head. Sing on, O bards! "To-morrow we lift the sail[2]."

[1] Odyss. 11. 211. Iliad 24. 98. [2] Carric-thura.

Personal epithets have been much used by all the poets of the most ancient ages: and when well chosen not general and unmeaning, they contribute not a little to render the style descriptive and animated. Beside epithets founded on bodily distinctions, akin to many of Homer's, we find in Ossian several which are remarkably beautiful and poetical. Such as, Oscar of the future fights, Fingal of the mildest look, Carril of other times, the mildly blushing Everallin; Bragela, the lonely sun-beam of Dunscaich: a Culdee, the son of the secret cell.

But of all the ornaments employed in descriptive poetry, comparisons or similies are the most splendid. These chiefly form what is called the imagery of a poem. And as they abound so much in the works of Ossian, and are commonly among the favourite passages of all poets, it may be expected that I should be somewhat particular in my remarks upon them.

A poetical simile always supposes two objects brought together, between which there is some near relation or connection in the fancy. What that relation ought to be, cannot be precisely defined. For various, almost numberless, are the analogies formed among objects, by a sprightly imagination. The relation of actual similitude, or likeness of appearance, is far from being the only foundation of poetical comparison. Sometimes a resemblance in the effect produced by two objects, is made the connecting principle: sometimes, a resemblance in one distinguishing property or circumstance. Very often two objects are brought together in a simile though they resemble one another, strictly speaking, in nothing, only because they raise in the mind a train of similar, and what may be called concordant ideas; so that the remembrance of the one, when recalled, serves to quicken and heighten the impression made by the other. Thus, to give an instance from our poet, the pleasure with which an old man looks back on the exploits of his youth, has certainly no direct resemblance to the beauty of a fine evening, farther than that both agree in producing a certain calm, placid joy. Yet Os-

sian has founded upon this, one of the most beautiful comparisons that is to be met with in any poet. "Wilt "thou not listen, son of the rock, to the song of Os- "sian? My soul is full of other times; the joy of my "youth returns. Thus, the sun appears in the west, "after the steps of his brightness have moved behind a "storm. The green hills lift their dewy heads. The "blue streams rejoice in the vale. The aged hero "comes forth on his staff; and his gray hair glitters in "the beam." Never was there a finer group of objects. It raises a strong conception of the old man's joy and elation of heart, by displaying a scene, which produces in every spectator a corresponding train of pleasing emotions; the declining sun looking forth in his brightness after a storm; the cheerful face of all nature; and the still life finely animated by the circumstance of the aged hero, with his staff and his grey locks; a circumstance both extremely picturesque in itself, and peculiarly suited to the main object of the comparison. Such analogies and associations of ideas as these, are highly pleasing to the fancy. They give opportunity for introducing many a fine poetical picture. They diversify the scene; they aggrandize the subject; they keep the imagination awake and sprightly. For as the judgment is principally exercised in distinguishing objects, and remarking the difference among those which seem like, so the highest amusement of the imagination is to trace likenesses and agreements among those which seem different.

The principal rules which respect poetical comparisons, are, that they be introduced on proper occasions, when the mind is disposed to relish them; and not in the midst of some severe and agitating passion, which cannot admit this play of fancy; that they be founded on a resemblance neither too near and obvious, so as to give little amusement to the imagination in tracing it, nor too faint and remote, so as to be apprehended with difficulty; that they serve either to illustrate the principal object, and to render the conception of it more

clear and distinct; or, at least, to heighten and embellish it by a suitable association of images [u].

Every country has a scenery peculiar to itself; and the imagery of a good poet will exhibit it: for as he copies after nature, his allusions will of course be taken from those objects which he sees around him, and which have often struck his fancy. For this reason, in order to judge of the propriety of poetical imagery, we ought to be, in some measure acquainted with the natural history of the country where the scene of the poem is laid. The introduction of foreign images betrays a poet, copying not from nature, but from other writers. Hence so many lions, and tygers, and eagles, and serpents, which we meet with in the similies of modern poets; as if these animals had acquired some right to a place in poetical comparisons for ever, because employed by ancient authors. They employed them with propriety, as objects generally known in their country; but as they are absurdly used as illustrations by us, who know them only at second hand, or by description. To most readers of modern poetry, it were more to the purpose to describe lions or tygers by similies taken from men, than to compare men to lions. Ossian is very correct in this particular. His imagery is without exception copied from that face of nature which he saw before his eyes; and by consequence may be expected to be lively. We meet with no Grecian or Italian scenery; but with the mists, and clouds, and storms, of a northern mountaneous region.

No poet abounds more in similies than Ossian. There are in this collection as many, at least, as in the whole Iliad and Odyssey of Homer. I am indeed inclined to think, that the works of both poets are too much crowded with them. Similies are sparkling ornaments; and like all things that sparkle, are apt to dazzle and tire us by their lustre. But if Ossian's similies be too frequent they have this advantage of being commonly shorter than Homer's; they interrupt his narration less; he just glances aside to some resembling object, and instantly

[u] See Elements of Criticism, Vol. iii. ch. 19.

ly returns to his former track. Homer's similies include a wider range of objects. But, in return, Ossian's are, without exception, taken from objects of dignity, which cannot be said for all those which Homer employs. The sun, the moon, and the stars, clouds and meteors, lightning and thunder, seas and whales, rivers, torrents, winds, ice, rain, snow, dews, mist, fire and smoke, trees and forests, heath and grass and flowers, rocks and mountains, music and songs, light and darkness, spirits and ghosts; these form the circle, within which Ossian's comparisons generally run. Some, not many, are taken from birds and beasts; as eagles, sea-fowl, the horse, the deer, and the mountain-bee; and a very few from such operations of art as were then known. Homer has diversified his imagery by many more allusions to the animal world; to lions, bulls, goats, herds of cattle, serpents, insects; and to various occupations of rural and pastoral life. Ossian's defect in this article is plainly owing to the desart, uncultivated state of his country, which suggested to him few images beyond natural inanimate objects, in their rudest form. The birds and animals of the country were probably not numerous; and his acquaintance with them was slender, as they were little subjected to the uses of man.

The great objection made to Ossian's imagery, is its uniformity, and the too frequent repetition of the same comparisons. In a work so thick sown with similies, one could not but expect to find images of the same kind sometimes suggested to the poet by resembling objects; especially to a poet like Ossian, who wrote from the immediate impulse of poetical enthusiasm, and without much preparation of study or labour. Fertile as Homer's imagination is acknowledged to be, who does not know how often his lions, and bulls, and flocks of sheep recur, with little or no variation; nay, sometimes in the very same words? The objection made to Ossian is, however, founded in a great measure upon a mistake. It has been supposed by inattentive readers, that wherever the moon, the cloud, or the thunder, re-

turns in a simile, it is the same simile, and the same moon, or cloud, or thunder, which they had met with a few pages before. Whereas very often the similies are widely different. The object, whence they are taken, is indeed in substance the same; but the image is new: for the appearance of the object is changed: it is presented to the fancy in another attitude; and clothed with new circumstances, to make it suit the different illustration for which it is employed. In this lies Ossian's great art; in so happily varying the form of the few natural appearances with which he was acquainted, as to make them correspond to a great many different objects.

Let us take for one instance the moon, which is very frequently introduced into his comparisons; as in northern climates, where the nights are long, the moon is a greater object of attention, than in the climate of Homer; and let us view how much our poet has diversified its appearance. The shield of a warrior is like "the darkened moon when it moves in a dun circle thro' "the heavens." The face of a ghost, wan and pale, is like "the beam of the setting moon." And a different appearance of a ghost, thin and indistinct, is like "the new moon seen through the gathered mist, when "the sky pours down the flaky snow, and the world is "silent and dark;" or in a different form still, it is like "the watery beam of the moon, when it rushes from "between two clouds, and the midnight shower is on "the field." A very opposite use is made of the moon in the description of Agandecca: she came in all her "beauty, like the moon from the cloud of the east." Hope, succeeded by disappointment, is, "joy rising on "her face, and sorrow returning again, like a thin cloud "on the moon." But when Swaran, after his defeat is cheered by Fingal's generosity, "His face brighten "ed like the full moon of heaven, when the cloud "vanish away, and leave her calm and broad in the "mid of the sky." Vinvela is "bright as the moon "when it trembles over the western wave;" but the soul of the guilty Uthal is, "dark as the troubled face

" of the moon, when it foretels the storm." And by a very fanciful and uncommon allusion, it is said of Cormac, who was to die in his early years, " Nor long shalt " thou lift the spear, mildly shining beam of youth! " Death stands dim behind thee, like the darkened hall " of the moon behind its growing light."

Another instance of the same nature may be taken from mist, which, as being a very familiar appearance in the country of Ossian, he applies to a variety of purposes, and pursues through a great many forms. Sometimes, which one would hardly expect, he employs it to heighten the appearance of a beautiful object. The hair of Morna is " like the mist of Cromla, " when it curls on the rock, and shines to the beam of " the west."—" The song comes with its music to " melt and please the ear. It is like soft mist, that rising " from a lake, pours on the silent vale. The green " flowers are filled with dew. The sun returns in its " strength and the mist is gone [v]." But, for the most part, mist is employed as a similitude of some disagreeable or terrible object. " The soul of Nathos was sad, " like the sun in the day of mist, when his face is wa- " tery and dim." " The darkness of old age comes " like the mist of the desart." " The face of a ghost is " pale as the mist of Cromla." " The gloom of battle " is rolled along as a mist that is poured on the valley, " when storms invade the silent sun-shine of heaven." Fame suddenly departing, is likened to " mist that flies " away before the rustling wind of the vale:" A ghost, slowly vanishing, to " mist that melts by degrees on " the sunny hill." Cairbar, after his treacherous assassination of Oscar, is compared to a pestilential fog. " I love a foe like Cathmor," says Fingal, " his soul is " great; his arm is strong; his battles are full of fame. " But the little soul is like a vapour that hovers round

[v] There is a remarkable propriety in this comparison. It is intended to explain the effect of soft and mournful music. Armin appears disturbed at a performance of this kind. Carmor says to him, " Why bursts the sigh of Armin? Is there a cause to " mourn? The song comes with its music, to melt and please the ear. It is like the " soft mist," &c. That is, such mournful songs have a happy effect to soften the heart, and to improve it by tender emotions, as the moisture of the mist nourishes the flowers; whilst the sadness they occasion is only transient, and soon dispelled by the succeeding occupations and amusements of life: " the sun returns in its strength, " and the mist is gone."

" the marshy lake. It never rises on the green hill, lest " the winds meet it there. Its dwelling is in the cave; " and it sends forth the dart of death." This is a simile highly finished. But there is another which is still more striking, founded also on mist, in the fourth book of Temora. Two factious chiefs are contending; Cathmor the king interposes, rebukes and silences them. The poet intends to give us the highest idea of Cathmor's superiority; and most effectually accomplished his intention by the following happy image. " They " sunk from the king on either side, like two columns " of morning mist, when the sun rises between them " on his glittering rocks. Dark is their rolling on ei- " ther side; each towards its reedy pool." These instances may sufficiently shew with what richness of imagination Ossian's comparisons abound, and at the same time, with what propriety of judgment they are employed. If his field was narrow, it must be admitted to have been as well cultivated as its extent would allow.

As it is usual to judge of poets from a comparison of their similies more than of other passages, it will perhaps be agreeable to the reader, to see how Homer and Ossian have conducted some images of the same kind. This might be shown in many instances. For as the great objects of nature are common to the poets of all nations, and make the general storehouse of all imagery, the ground-work of their comparisons must of course be frequently the same. I shall select only few of the most considerable from both poets. Mr Pope's translation of Homer can be of no use to us here. The parallel is altogether unfair between prose, and the imposing harmony of flowing numbers. It is only by viewing Homer in the simplicity of a prose translation, that we can form any comparison between the two bards.

The shock of two encountering armies, the noise and the tumult of battle, afford one of the most grand and awful subjects of description; on which all epic poets have exerted their strength. Let us first hear Homer:

The following description is a favourite one, for we find it twice repeated in the same words[w]. "When "now the conflicting hosts joined in the field of battle, "then were mutually opposed shields and swords, and "the strength of armed men. The bossy bucklers "were dashed against each other. The universal tu- "mult rose. There were mingled the triumphant shouts "and the dying groans of the victors and the van- "quished. The earth streamed with blood. As when "winter torrents rushing from the mountains, pour "into a narrow valley their violent waters. They issue "from a thousand springs, and mix in the hollowed "channel. The distant shepherd hears on the moun- "tain their roar from afar. Such was the terror and "the shout of the engaging armies." In another pas- sage, the poet, much in the manner of Ossian, heaps simile on simile, to express the vastness of the idea with which his imagination seems to labour. "With "a mighty shout the hosts engage. Not so loud roars "the wave of ocean, when driven against the shore by "the whole force of the boisterous north; not so loud "in the woods of the mountain, the noise of the flame, "when rising in its fury to consume the forest; not so "loud the wind among the lofty oaks, when the wrath "of the storm rages; as was the clamour of the Greeks "and Trojans, when, roaring terrible, they rushed "against each other[x]."

To these descriptions and similies, we may oppose the following from Ossian, and leave the reader to judge between them. He will find images of the same kind employed, commonly less extended, but thrown forth with a glowing rapidity which characterises our poet. "As autumn's dark storms pour from two echoing "hills, towards each other approached the heroes. As "two dark streams from high rocks meet, and mix, "and roar on the plain; loud, rough, and dark in bat- "tle, meet Lochlin and Inisfail. Chief mixes his "strokes with chief, and man with man. Steel clang- "ing, sounded on steel. Helmets are cleft on high;

[w] Iliad iv. 446. and Iliad viii. 60. [x] Iliad xiv. 393.

" blood bursts and smokes around. As the troubled
" noise of the ocean, when roll the waves on high; a
" the last peal of the thunder of heaven, such is the
" noise of battle. As roll a thousand waves to the
" rock, so Swaran's host came on; as meets a rock
" thousand waves, so Inisfail met Swaran. Death raises
" all his voices around, and mixes with the sound of
" shields. The field echoes from wing to wing, as
" hundred hammers that rise by turns on the red son
" of the furnace. As an hundred winds on Morven; as
" the streams of an hundred hills; as clouds fly succes-
" sive over heaven; or, as the dark ocean assaults the
" shore of the desart; so roaring, so vast, so terrible
" the armies mixed on Lena's echoing heath." In several of these images, there is a remarkable similarity to Homer's; but what follows is superior to any comparison that Homer uses on this subject. " The groan
" of the people spread over the hills; it was like the
" thunder of night, when the cloud bursts on Cona
" and a thousand ghosts shriek at once on the hollow
" wind." Never was an image of more awful sublimity employed to heighten the terror of battle.

Both poets compare the appearance of an army approaching, to the gathering of dark clouds. " As when
" a shepherd," says Homer, " beholds from the rock
" cloud borne along the sea by the western wind
" black as pitch it appears from afar, sailing over the
" ocean, and carrying the dreadful storm. He shrinks
" at the sight, and drives his flock into the cave: such
" under the Ajaces, moved on, the dark, the thickened
" phalanx to the war."[y]—" They came," says Ossian
" over the desart, like stormy clouds, when the winds
" roll them over the heath; their edges are tinged
" with lightning, and the echoing groves foresee the
" storm." The edges of the cloud tinged with lightning, is a sublime idea; but the shepherd and his flock render Homer's simile more picturesque. This is frequently the difference between the two poets. Ossian gives no more than the main image, strong and

[y] Iliad iv. 275.

full. Homer adds circumstances and appendages, which amuse the fancy, by enlivening the scenery.

Homer compares the regular appearance of an army to "clouds that are settled on the mountain top, in the "day of calmness, when the strength of the north-wind "sleeps[z]." Ossian, with full as much propriety, compares the appearance of a disordered army, to "the "mountain cloud, when the blast hath entered its "womb, and scatters the curling gloom on every side." Ossian's clouds assume a great many forms; and, as we might expect from his climate, are a fertile source of imagery to him. "The warriors followed their chiefs "like the gathering of the rainy clouds, behind the red "meteors of heaven." An army retreating without coming to action, is likened to "clouds, that having "long threatened rain, retire slowly behind the hills." The picture of Oithona, after she had determined to die, is lively and delicate. "Her soul was resolved, "and the tear was dried from her wildly-looking eye. "A troubled joy rose on her mind, like the red path of "the lightning on a stormy cloud." The image also of the gloomy Cairbar, meditating, in silence, the assassination of Oscar, until the moment came when his designs were ripe for execution, is extremely noble and complete in all its parts. "Cairbar heard their words "in silence, like the cloud of a shower; it stands dark "on Cromla, till the lightning bursts its side. The "valley gleams with red light; the spirits of the storm "rejoice. So stood the silent king of Temora; at "length his words are heard."

Homer's comparison of Achilles to the Dog-star, is very sublime. "Priam beheld him rushing along the "plain, shining in his armour, like the star of autumn; "bright are its beams, distinguished amidst the multi-"tude of stars in the dark hour of night. It rises in "its splendor; but its splendor is fatal; betokening "to miserable men the destroying heat[a]." The first appearance of Fingal is, in like manner, compared by Ossian to a star or meteor. "Fingal, tall in his ship,

[z] Iliad v. 522. [a] Iliad xxii. 263.

" stretched his bright lance before him. Terrible wa
" the gleam of his steel: it was like the green meteo
" of death, setting in the heath of Malmor, when th
" traveller is alone, and the broad moon is darkened i
" heaven." The hero's appearance in Homer is mor
magnificent; in Ossian, more terrible.

A tree cut down, or overthrown by a storm, is a si
militude frequent among poets for describing the fall o
a warrior in battle. Homer employs it often. But th
most beautiful by far of his comparisons, founded o
this object, indeed one of the most beautiful in th
whole Iliad, is that on the death of Euphorbus. " A
" the young and verdant olive which a man hath reare
" with care in a lonely field, where the springs of wa
" ter bubble around it; it is fair and flourishing; it i
" fanned by the breath of all the winds, and loade
" with white blossoms; when the sudden blast of
" whirlwind descending, roots it out from its bed, an
" stretches it on the dust[b]." To this, elegant as it i
we may oppose the following simile of Ossian's, relat
ing to the death of the three sons of Usnoth. " The
" fell, like three young oaks which stood alone on th
" hill. The traveller saw the lovely trees, and wor
" dered how they grew so lonely. The blast of th
" desart came by night, and laid their green heads lo
" Next day he returned; but they were withered, an
" the heath was bare." Malvina's allusion to the sam
object, in her lamentation over Oscar, is so exquisitel
tender, that I cannot forbear giving it a place also. "
" was a lovely tree in thy presence, Oscar! with a
" my branches round me. But thy death came like
" blast from the desart, and laid my green head lo
" The spring returned with its showers, but no le
" of mine arose" Several of Ossian's similes take
from trees, are remarkably beautiful, and diversifie
with well chosen circumstances; such as that upon th
death of Ryno and Orla: " They have fallen like th
" oak of the desart; when it lies across a stream, ar
" withers in the wind of the mountains:" or th

[b] Iliad xvii. 53.

which Ossian applies to himself; "I, like an ancient oak in Morven, moulder alone in my place; the blast hath lopped my branches away; and I tremble at the winds of the north."

As Homer exalts his heroes by comparing them to gods, Ossian makes the same use of comparisons taken from spirits and ghosts. Swaran "roared in battle, like the shrill spirit of a storm that sits dim on the clouds of Gormal, and enjoys the death of the mariner." His people gathered around Erragon, "like storms around the ghost of night, when he calls them from the top of Morven, and prepares to pour them on the land of the stranger." "They fell before my son, like groves in the desart, when an angry ghost rushes through night, and takes their green heads in his hand." In such images Ossian appears in his strength; for very seldom have supernatural beings been painted with so much sublimity, and such force of imagination, as by this poet. Even Homer, great as he is, must yield to him in similies formed upon these. Take, for instance, the Iliad. Meriones followed Idomeneus to battle, like Mars the destroyer of men, when he rushes to war. Terror, his beloved son, strong and fierce attends him; who fills with dismay the most valiant hero. They come from Thrace, armed against the Ephyrians, and Phlegyans; nor do they regard the prayers of either; but dispose of success at will [c]." The idea here is undoubtedly noble: but observe what a figure Ossian sets before the astonished imagination, and with what sublimely terrible circumstances he has heightened it. "He rushed in the sound of his arms, like the dreadful spirit of Loda, when he comes in the roar of a thousand storms, and scatters battles from his eyes. He sits on a cloud over Lochlin's seas. His mighty hand is on his sword. The winds lift his flaming locks. So terrible was Cuthullin in the day of his fame."

Homer's comparisons relate chiefly to martial subjects, to the appearances and motions of armies, the engagement and death of heroes, and the various incidents of

[c] Iliad xiii. 298.

war. In Ossian we find a greater variety of other subjects illustrated by similies; particularly the songs of bards, the beauty of women, the different circumstances of old age, sorrow, and private distress; which give occasion to much beautiful imagery. What, for instance, can be more delicate and moving, than the following simile of Oithona's, in her lamentation over the dishonour she had suffered? "Chief of Strumon," replied the sighing maid, "why didst thou come over the dark blue wave to "Nuath's mournful daughter? Why did I not pass away "in secret, like the flower of the rock, that lifts its fair "head unseen, and strews its withered leaves to the "blast?" The music of bards, a favourite object with Ossian, is illustrated by a variety of the most beautiful appearances that are to be found in nature. It is compared to the calm shower of spring; to the dews of the morning on the hill of roes; to the face of the blue and still lake. Two similies on this subject, I shall quote, because they would do honour to any of the most celebrated classics. The one is: "Sit thou on the heath, O bard, "and let us hear thy voice; it is pleasant as the gale of "the spring that sighs on the hunter's ear, when he "wakens from dreams of joy, and has heard the music "of the spirits of the hill." The other contains a short but exquisitely tender image, accompanied with the finest poetical painting. "The music of Carril was like the "memory of joys that are past, pleasant and mournful "to the soul. The ghosts of departed bards heard it "from Silmora's side. Soft sounds spread along the "wood; and the silent valleys of night rejoice." What a figure would such imagery and such scenery have made, had they been presented to us adorned with the sweetness and harmony of the Virgilian numbers!

I have chosen all along to compare Ossian with Homer, rather than Virgil, for an obvious reason. There is a much nearer correspondence between the times and manners of the two former poets. Both wrote in an early period of society; both are originals; both are distinguished by simplicity, sublimity, and fire. The correct elegance of Virgil, his artful imitation of Homer

he Roman stateliness which he everywhere maintains, dmit no parallel with the abrupt boldness and enthusistic warmth of the Celtic bard. In one article, indeed, here is a resemblance. Virgil is more tender than Homer; and therefore agrees more with Ossian; with this difference, that the feelings of the one are more gentle nd polished, those of the other more strong; the tenderness of Virgil softens, that of Ossian dissolves and overcomes the heart.

A resemblance sometimes may be observed between Ossian's comparisons, and those employed by the sacred writers. They abound much in this figure, and they use it with the utmost propriety [d]. The imagery of Scripture exhibits a soil and climate altogether different from those of Ossian; a warmer country, a more smiling face of nature, the arts of agriculture and of rural life much farther advanced. The wine-press, and the threshing-floor, are often presented to us, the cedar and the palm-tree, the fragrance of perfumes, the voice of the turtle, and the beds of lilies. The similies are, like Ossian's, generally short, touching on one point of resemblance, rather than spread out into little episodes. In the following example may be perceived what inexpressible grandeur poetry receives from the intervention of the Deity. "The nations shall rush like the rushing "of many waters; but God shall rebuke them, and they "shall fly far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the "mountains before the wind, and like the down of the "thistle before the whirlwind [e]."

Besides formal comparisons, the poetry of Ossian is embellished with many beautiful metaphors: such as that remarkably fine one applied to Deugala; "she was "covered with the light of beauty; but her heart was "the house of pride." This mode of expression, which suppresses the mark of comparison, and substitutes a figured description, in room of the object described, is a great enlivener of style. It denotes that glow and rapidity of fancy which, without pausing to form a regular

[d] See Dr Lowth de Sacra Poesi Hebræorum.

[e] Isaiah, xvii. 13.

simile, paints the object at one stroke. "Thou art to "me the beam of the east, rising in a land unknown." —"In peace thou art the gale of spring; in war, the "mountain storm." "Pleasant be thy rest, O lovely "beam, soon hast thou set on our hills! The steps of "thy departure were stately, like the moon on the blue "trembling wave. But thou hast left us in darkness, "first of the maids of Lutha! soon hast thou set, Mal-"vina! but thou risest like the beam of the east, among "the spirits of thy friends, where they sit in their stormy "halls, the chambers of the thunder." This is correct and finely supported. But in the following instance, the metaphor, though very beautiful at the beginning, becomes imperfect before it closes, by being improperly mixed with the literal sense. "Trathal went forth with "the stream of his people; but they met a rock; Fin-"gal stood unmoved; broken they rolled back from "his side. Nor did they roll in safety; for the spear of "the king pursued their flight."

The hyperbole is a figure which we might expect to find often employed by Ossian; as the undisciplined imagination of early ages generally prompts exaggeration, and carries its objects to excess; whereas longer experience, and farther progress in the arts of life, chasten men's ideas and expressions. Yet Ossan's hyperboles appear not to me either so frequent or so harsh as might at first have been looked for; an advantage owing no doubt to the more cultivated state in which, as was before shewn, poetry subsisted among the ancient Celtæ, than among most other barbarous nations. One of the most exaggerated descriptions in the whole work, is what meets us at the beginning of Fingal, where the scout makes his report to Cuthullin of the landing of the foe. But this is so far from deserving censure that its merits praise, as being on that occasion natural and proper. The scout arrives, trembling, and full of fears; and it is well known, that no passion disposes men to hyperbolise more than terror. It both annihilates themselves in their own apprehension, and magnifies every object which they view through the medium of a troub-

led imagination. Hence all those indistinct images of formidable greatness, the natural marks of a disturbed and confused mind, which occur in Moran's description of Swaran's appearance, and in his relation of the conference which they held together; not unlike the report which the afrighted Jewish spies made to their leader of the land of Canaan. "The land through "which we have gone to search it, is a land that eat-"eth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people "that we saw in it are men of great stature; and there "saw we giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the "giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, "and so we were in their sight.*f*."

With regard to personifications, I formerly observed that Ossian was sparing, and I accounted for his being so. Allegorical personages he has none; and their absence is not to be regretted. For the intermixture of those shadowy beings, which have not the support even of mythological or legendary belief, with human actors, seldom produces a good effect. The fiction becomes too visible and phantastic; and overthrows that impression of reality, which the probable recital of human actions is calculated to make upon the mind. In the serious and pathetic scenes of Ossian especially, allegorical characters would have been as much out of place as in tragedy; serving only unseasonably to amuse the fancy, whilst they stopped the current, and weakened the force of passion.

With apostrophes, or addresses, to persons absent or dead, which have been, in all ages, the language of passion, our poet abounds; and they are among his highest beauties. Witness the apostrophe, in his first book of Fingal, to the maid of Inistore, whose lover had fallen in battle; and that inimitably fine one of Cuthullin to Bragela, at the conclusion of the same book. He commands the harp to be struck in her praise; and the mention of Bragela's name, immediately suggesting to him a crowd of tender ideas, "Dost thou raise "thy fair face from the rocks," he exclaims, "to find

f Numbers xiii. 32, 33.

" the sails of Cuthullin? The sea is rolling far distant, " and its white foam shall deceive thee for my sails." And now his imagination being wrought up to conceive her as, at that moment, really in this situation, he becomes afraid of the harm she may receive from the inclemency of the night; and with an enthusiasm, happy and affecting, though beyond the cautious strain of modern poetry, " Retire," he proceeds, " retire, " for it is night, my love, and the dark winds sigh in " thy hair. Retire to the hall of my feasts, and think " of the times that are past; for I will not return till " the storm of war has ceased. O Connal, speak of " wars and arms, and send her from my mind; for " lovely with her raven hair is the white-bosomed " daughter of Sorglan." This breathes all the native spirit of passion and tenderness.

The addresses to the sun, to the moon, and to the evening star, must draw the attention of every reader of taste, as among the most splendid ornaments of this collection. The beauties of each are too great, and too obvious to need any particular comment. In one passage only of the address to the moon, their appears some obscurity. " Whither dost thou retire from thy " course, when the darkness of thy countenance grows? " hast thou thy hall like Ossian? Dwellest thou in the " shadow of grief? have thy sisters fallen from heaven? " Are they who rejoiced with thee at night, no more? " Yes, they have fallen, fair light! and thou dost often " retire to mourn." We may be at a loss to comprehend, at first view, the ground of these speculations of Ossian, concerning the moon; but when all the circumstances are attended to, they will appear to flow naturally from the present situation of his mind. A mind under the dominion of any strong passion tinctures with its own disposition every object which it beholds. The old bard, with his heart bleeding for the loss of all his friends, is meditating on the different phases of the moon. Her waning and darkness, presents to his melancholy imagination, the image of sorrow; and presently the idea arises, and is indulged

that, like himself, she retires to mourn over the loss of other moons, or of stars, whom he calls her sisters, and fancies to have once rejoiced with her at night, now fallen from heaven. Darkness suggested the idea of mourning, and mourning suggested nothing so naturally to Ossian, as the death of beloved friends. An instance precisely similar, of this influence of passion, may be seen in a passage, which has always been admired, of Shakespeare's King Lear. The old man on the point of distraction through the inhumanity of his daughters, sees Edgar appear disguised like a beggar and a madman.

LEAR. Didst thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou come to this?
Couldest thou leave nothing? Didst thou give them all?
KENT. He hath no daughters, Sir.
LEAR. Death, traitor! nothing could have subdued nature
To such a lowness, but his unkind daughters.
KING LEAR, Act 3. Scene 5.

The apostrophe to the winds in the opening of Dar-thula, is in the highest spirit of poetry. "But the "winds deceive thee, O Dar-thula, and deny the "woody Etha to thy sails. These are not thy moun-"tains, Nathos, nor is that the rear of thy climbing "waves. The halls of Cairbar are near, and the towers "of the foe lift their herd. Where have ye been, ye "southern winds; when the sons of my love were de-"ceived? But ye have been sporting on plains, and "pursuing the thistle's beard. O that ye had been rust-"ling in the sails of Nathos, till the hills of Etha rose! "till they rose in their clouds, and saw their coming "chief." This passage is remarkable for the resemblance it bears to an expostulation with the wood nymphs on their absence at a critical time; which is a favourite poetical idea, Virgil has copied from Theocritus, and Milton has very happily imitated from both.

Where were ye nymphs! when the remorseless deep
Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep
Where your old bards, the famous druids, lie;

Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream g.

Having now treated fully of Ossian's talents with respect to description and imagery, in only remains to make some observations on his sentiments. No sentiments can be beautiful without being proper; that is, suited to the character and situations of those who utter them. in this respect, Ossian is as correct as most writers. His characters, as above observed, are in general well supported; which could not have been the case, had the sentiments been unnatural or out of place. A variety of personages of different ages, sexes, and conditions, are introduced into his poems; and they speak and act with a propriety of sentiment and behaviour, which it is surprising to find in so rude an age. Let the poem of Dar-thula, throughout, be taken as an example.

But it is not enough that sentiments be natural and proper. In order to acquire any high degree of poetical merit, they must also be sublime and pathetic.

The sublime is not confined to sentiment alone. It belongs to description also; and whether in description or in sentiment, imports such ideas presented to the mind, as raise it to an uncommon degree of elevation and fill it with admiration and astonishment. This is the highest effect either of eloquence or poetry: and to produce this effect, requires a genius glowing with the strongest and warmest conception of some object awful, great, or magnificent. That this character of genius belongs to Ossian, may, I think, sufficiently appear from many of the passages I have already had occasion to quote. To produce more instances were superfluous. If the engagement of Fingal with the spirit of Loda, in Carric-thura; if the encounters of the armies of Fingal; if the address to the sun in Carthon; if the similies founded upon ghosts and spirits of the night, all formerly mentioned, be not admitted as ex-

g Milton's Lycidas. See Theocrit. Idyll I.
Πα ποχ' αρ ησθ' ὁκα Δαφνις εταχετο; πα ποκα, Νυμφαι, &c.
And Virg. Eclog. 10.
Quæ nemora out qui vos saltu habuere, puellæ, &c.

amples, and illustrious ones too, of the true poetical sublime, I confess myself entirely ignorant of this qualification.

All the circumstances, indeed, of Ossian's composition, are favourable to the sublime, more perhaps than to any other species of beauty. Accuracy and correctness; artfully connected narration; exact method and proportion of parts, we may look for in polished times. The gay and the beautiful will appear to more advantage in the midst of smiling scenery, and pleasurable themes. But amidst the rude scenes of nature, amidst rocks, and torrents, and whirlwinds, and battles, dwells the sublime. It is the thunder and the lightning of genius. It is the offspring of nature, not of art. It is negligent of all the lesser graces, and perfectly consistent with a certain noble disorder. It associates naturally with the grave and solemn spirit which distinguishes our author. For the sublime is an awful and serious emotion; and it is heightened by all the images of trouble, and terror, and darkness.

> Ipse pater, media nimborum in nocte, corusca
> Fulmina molitur dextra; quo maxima motu
> Terra tremit; fugere feræ; et mortalia corda
> Per gentes, humilis stravit pavor; ille, flagranti
> Aut Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia telo
> Dejicit.——— VIRG. GEORG. I.

Simplicity and conciseness, are never-failing characteristics of the style of a sublime writer. He rests on the majesty of his sentiments, not on the pomp of his expressions. The main secret of being sublime, is to say great things in few, and in plain words: for every superfluous decoration degrades a sublime idea. The mind rises and swells when a lofty description or sentiment is presented to it, in its native form. But no sooner does the poet attempt to spread out this sentiment or description, and to deck it round and round with glittering ornaments, than the mind begins to fall from its high elevation; the transport is over; the beautiful may remain, but the sublime is gone. Hence the concise and simple style of Ossian, gives great advantage

to his sublime conceptions ; and assists them in seizing the imagination with full power[b].

Sublimity, as belonging to sentiment, coincides in a great measure with magnanimity, heroism, and generosity of sentiment. Whatever discovers human nature in its greatest elevation ; whatever bespeaks a high effort of soul, or shows a mind superior to pleasures, to dangers, or to death, forms what may be called the moral or sentimental sublime. For this Ossian is eminently distinguished. No poet maintains a higher tone of virtuous and noble sentiment, throughout all his works. Particularly in all the sentiments of Fingal there is a grandeur and loftiness proper to swell the mind with the highest idea of human perfection. Wherever he appears, we behold the hero. The objects which he pursues are always truly great; to bend the proud; to protect the injured; to defend his friends; to overcome his enemies by generosity more than by force. A portion of the same spirit actuates all the other heroes. Valour reigns; but it is a generous valour void of cruelty, animated by honour, not by hatred. We behold no debasing passions among Fingal's warriors ; no spirit of avarice or of insult ; but a perpetual contention for fame ; a desire of being distinguished and remembered for gallant actions ; a love of justice and a zealous attachment to their friends and their country. Such is the strain of sentiment in the works of Ossian.

But the sublimity of moral sentiments, if they wanted the softening of the tender, would be in hazard of giv

b The noted saying of Julius Cæsar to the pilot in a storm ; " Quid times? Cæsarem " vehis ;" is magnanimous and sublime. Lucan, not satisfied with this simple conciseness, resolved to amplify and improve the thought. Observe how, every time he twists it round, it departs farther from the sublime, till, at last, it ends in tumid declamation :

Sperne minas, inquit, Pelagi, ventoque furenti
Trade sinum. Italiam, si cœlo auctore, recusas,
Me, pete. Sola tibi causa hæc est justa timoris
Vectorem non nosse tuum ; quem numina nunquam
Destituunt ; de quo male tunc fortuna meretur,
Cum post vota venit ; medias perrumpe procellas
Tutela secure mea. Cœli iste fretique,
Non puppis nostræ, labor est. Hanc Cæsare pressam
A fluctu defendit onus.
—Quid tanta strage paratur,
Ignoras? Quærit pelagi cælique tumultu
Quid præstet fortuna mihi.— PHARSAL. V. 5[illegible]

ing a hard and stiff air to poetry. It is not enough to admire. Admiration is a cold feeling in comparison of that deep interest which the heart takes in tender and pathetic scenes; where, by a mysterious attachment to the objects of compassion, we are pleased and delighted even whilst we mourn. With scenes of this kind, Ossian abounds; and his high merit in these is incontestable. He may be blamed for drawing tears too often from our eyes; but that he has the power of commanding them, I believe no man who has the least sensibility will question. The general character of his poetry is the heroic, mixed with the elegiac strain; admiration tempered with pity. Ever fond of giving, as he expresses it, "the joy of grief," it is visible that on all moving subjects he delights to exert his genius; and accordingly, never were there finer pathetic situations than what his works present. His great art in managing them lies in giving vent to the simple and natural emotions of the heart. We meet with no exaggerated declamation; no subtle refinements on sorrow; no substitution of description in place of passion. Ossian felt strongly himself; and the heart, when uttering its native language, never fails, by powerful sympathy, to affect the heart. A great variety of examples might be produced. We need only open the book to find them everywhere. What, for instance, can be more moving, than the lamentations of Oithona, after her misfortune? Gaul, the son of Morni, her lover, ignorant of what she had suffered, comes to her rescue. Their meeting is tender in the highest degree. He proposes to engage her foe, in single combat, and gives her in charge what she is to do, if he himself shall fall. "And shall the "daughter of Nuath live?" she replied with a bursting sigh. "Shall I live in Tromathon, and the son of "Morni low? My heart is not of that rock; nor my "soul careless as that sea, which lifts its blue waves to "every wind, and rolls beneath the storm. The blast "which shall lay thee low, shall spread the branches of "Oithona on earth. We shall wither together, son of "car-borne Morni! The narrow house is pleasant to

" me; and the grey stone of the dead; for never mor
" will I leave thy rocks, sea-surrounded Tromathon
" Chief of Strumon, why camest thou over the wave
" to Nuath's mournful daughter? Why did not I pas
" away in secret like the flower of the rock, that lift
" its fair head unseen, and strews its withered leaves o
" the blast? Why didst thou come, O Gaul! to hea
" my departing sigh? O had I dwelt at Duvranna, i
" the bright beam of my fame! Then had my yea
" come on with joy; and the virgins would bless m
" steps. But I fall in youth, son of Morni, and m
" father shall blush in his hall."

Oithona mourns like a woman; in Cuthullin's ex pressions of grief after his defeat, we behold the sent ments of a hero, generous but desponding. The situa tion is remarkably fine. Cuthullin, roused from h cave by the noise of battle, sees Fingal victorious i the field. He is described as kindling at the sigh " His hand is on the sword of his fathers; his red-rollin " eyes on the foe. He thrice attempted to rush t " battle; and thrice did Connal stop him;" suggestin that Fingal was routing the foe; and that he ought no by the show of superfluous aid, to deprive the king any part of the honour of a victory, which was owin to him alone. Cuthullin yields to this generous sent ment; but we see it stinging him to the heart with th sense of his own disgrace. " Then, Carril, go," replie the chief, " and greet the king of Morven. Whe " Lochlin falls away like a stream after rain, and th " noise of the battle is over, then be thy voice swe " in his ear, to praise the king of swords. Give hi " the sword of Caithbat; for Cuthullin is worthy n " more to lift the arms of his fathers. But, O ye ghos " of the lonely Cromla! ye souls of chiefs that are n " more! be ye the companions of Cuthullin, and tal " to him in the cave of his sorrow. For never mo " shall I be renowned among the mighty in the lan " I am like a beam that has shone: Like a mist th " has fled away; when the blast of the morning cam " and brightened the shaggy side of the hill. Connal

" talk of arms no more: departed is my fame. My " sighs shall be on Cromla's wind; till my footsteps " cease to be seen. And thou, white-bosomed Bra- " gela! mourn over the fall of my fame; for van- " quished, I will never return to thee, thou sun-beam " of Dunscaich!"

——————Æstuat ingens
Uno in corde pudor luctusque, et conscia virtus.

Besides such extended pathetic scenes, Ossian frequently pierces the heart by a single unexpected stroke. When Oscar fell in battle, " No father mourned his son " slain in youth; no brother his brother of love; they " fell without tears, for the chief of the people was " low." In the admirable interview of Hector with Andromache, in the sixth Iliad, the circumstance of the child in his nurse's arms, has often been remarked as adding much to the tenderness of the scene. In the following passage relating to the death of Cuthullin, we find a circumstance that must strike the imagination with still greater force. " And is the son of Semo " fallen?" said Carril with a sigh. " Mournful are " Tura's walls, and sorrow dwells at Dunscaich. Thy " spouse is left alone in her youth; the son of thy love " is alone. He shall come to Bragela, and ask her " why she weeps. He shall lift his eyes to the wall, " and see his father's sword. Whose sword is that? " he will say; and the soul of his mother is sad." Soon after Fingal had shewn all the grief of a father's heart for Ryno, one of his sons, fallen in battle, he is calling, after his accustomed manner, his sons to the chase. " Call," says he, " Fillan and Ryno—But he is not " here—My son rests on the bed of death." This unexpected start of anguish is worthy of the highest tragic poet.

If she comes in, she'll sure speak to my wife—
My wife!—My wife!—What wife?—I have no wife—
Oh insupportable! Oh heavy hour!
OTHELLO, Act 5. Scene 7.

The contrivance of the incident in both poets is similar; but the circumstances are varied with judgment.

Othello dwells upon the name of wife, when it had fallen from him, with the confusion and horror of one tortured with guilt. Fingal, with the dignity of a hero, corrects himself, and suppresses his rising grief.

The contrast which Ossian frequently makes between his present and his former state, diffuses, over his whole poetry, a solemn pathetic air, which cannot fail to make impression on every heart. The conclusion of the Songs of Selma, is particularly calculated for this purpose. Nothing can be more poetical and tender, or can leave upon the mind a stronger, and more affecting idea of the venerable aged bard. "Such were "the words of the bards in the days of the song; when "the king heard the music of harps, and the tales of "other times. The chiefs gathered from all their hills "and heard the lovely sound. They praised the voice "of Cona[i]; the first among a thousand bards. But "age is now on my tongue, and my soul has failed. I "hear, sometimes, the ghosts of bards, and learn their "pleasant song. But memory fails on my mind; I "hear the call of years. They say, as they pass along "Why does Ossian sing? Soon shall he lie in the nar "row house, and no bard shall raise his fame. Roll "on, ye dark-brown years! for ye bring no joy in "your course. Let the tomb open to Ossian, for his "strength has failed. The sons of the song are gone "to rest. My voice remains, like a blast, that roars "lonely on a sea-surrounding rock, after the winds are "laid. The dark moss whistles there, and the distant "mariner sees the waving trees."

Upon the whole; if to feel strongly, and to describe naturally, be the two chief ingredients in poetical genius, Ossian must, after fair examination, be held to possess that genius in a high degree. The question is not whether a few impropriieties may be pointed out in his works; whether this, or that passage, might not have been worked up with more art and skill, by some writer of happier times? A thousand such cold and frivolous criticisms, are altogether indecisive as to his

[i] Ossian himself is poetically called the Voice of Cona.

genuine merit. But has he the spirit, the fire, the inspiration of a poet? Does he utter the voice of nature? Does he elevate by his sentiments? Does he interest by his descriptions? Does he paint to the heart as well as to the fancy? Does he make his readers glow, and tremble, and weep? These are the great characteristics of true poetry. Where these are found, he must be a minute critic indeed, who can dwell upon slight defects. A few beauties of this high kind, transcend whole volumes of faultless mediocrity. Uncouth and abrupt Ossian may sometimes appear, by reason of his conciseness. But he is sublime, he is pathetic, in an eminent degree. If he has not the extensive knowledge, the regular dignity of narration, the fullness and accuracy of description, which we find in Homer and Virgil, yet in strength of imagination, in grandeur of sentiment, in native majesty of passion, he is fully their equal. If he flows not always like a clear stream, yet he breaks forth often like a torrent of fire. Of art too, he is far from being destitute; and his imagination is remarkable for delicacy as well as strength. Seldom or never is he either trifling or tedious; and if he be thought too melancholy, yet he is always moral. Though his merit were in other respects much less than it is, this alone ought to entitle him to high regard, that his writings are remarkably favourable to virtue. They awake the tenderest sympathies, and inspire the most generous emotions. No reader can rise from him, without being warmed with humanity, virtue, and honour.

Though unacquainted with the original language, there is no one but must judge the translation to deserve the highest praise, on account of its beauty and elegance.

Of its faithfulness and accuracy, I have been assured by persons skilled in the Gaelic tongue, who, from their youth, were acquainted with many of these poems of Ossian. To transfuse such spirited and fervid ideas from one language into another; to translate literally, and yet with such a glow of poetry; to keep alive so

much passion, and support so much dignity throughout, is one of the most difficult works of genius, and proves the translator to have been animated with no small portion of Ossian's spirit.

The measured prose which he has employed, possesses considerable advantages above any sort of versification he could have chosen. Whilst it pleases and fills the ear with a variety of harmonious cadences, being, at the same time, freer from constraint in the choice and arrangement of words, it allows the spirit of the original to be exhibited with more justness, force, and simplicity. Elegant, however, and masterly as Mr Macpherson's translation is, we must never forget, whilst we read it, that we are putting the merit of the original to a severe test. For, we are examining a poet stripped of his native dress: divested of the harmony of his own numbers. We know how much grace and energy the works of the Greek and Latin poets receive from the charm of versification in their original languages. If, then, destitute of this advantage, exhibited in a literal version, Ossian still has power to please as a poet; and not to please only, but often to command, to transport, to melt the heart; we may very safely infer, that his productions are the offspring of true and uncommon genius; and we may boldly assign him a place among those whose works are to last for ages.

APPENDIX.

The substance of the preceding dissertation was originally delivered, soon after the first publication of Fingal, in the course of my lectures in the University of Edinburgh; and, at the desire of several of the hearers, was afterwards enlarged, and given to the public.

As the degree of antiquity belonging to the Poems of Ossian, appeared to be a point which might bear dispute, I endeavoured from internal evidence, to show that these poems must be referred to a very remote period; without pretending to ascertain precisely the date of their composition. I had not the least suspicion, when this dissertation was first published, that there was any occasion for supporting their authenticity, as genuine productions of the Highlands of Scotland, as translations from the Gaelic language; not forgeries of a supposed translator. In Scotland their authenticity was never called in question. I myself had particular reasons to be fully satisfied concerning it. My knowledge of Mr Macpherson's personal honour and integrity, gave me full assurance of his being incapable of putting such a gross imposition, first upon his friends, and then upon the public; and if this had not been sufficient, I knew, besides, that the manner in which these poems were brought to light, was entirely inconsistent with any fraud. An accidental conversation with a gentleman distinguished in the literary world, gave occasion to Mr Macpherson's translating literally one or two small pieces of the old Gaelic poetry. These being shewn to me and some others, rendered us very desirous of becoming more acquainted with that poetry. Mr Macpherson, afraid of not doing justice to compo-

sitions which he admired in the original, was very backward to undertake the task of translating; and the publication of 'The Fragments of Ancient Poems,' was, with no small importunity extorted from him. The high reputation which these presently acquired, made it, he thought, unjust that the world should be deprived of the possession of more, if more of the same kind could be recovered: and Mr Macpherson was warmly urged by several gentlemen of rank and taste, to disengage himself from other occupations, and to undertake a journey through the Highlands and Islands, on purpose to make a collection of those curious remains of ancient genius. He complied with their desire, and spent several months in visiting those remote parts of the country; during which time he corresponded frequently with his friends in Edinburgh, informed them of his progress, of the applications which he made in different quarters, and of the success which he met with; several letters of his, and of those who assisted him in making discoveries, passed through my hands; his undertaking was the object of considerable attention; and returning at last, fraught with the poetical treasures of the north, he set himself to translate under the eye of some who were acquainted with the Gaelic language, and looked into his manuscripts; and, by a large publication, made an appeal to all the natives of the Highlands, and Islands of Scotland, whether he had been faithful to his charge, and done justice to their well-known and favourite poems.

Such a transaction certainly did not afford any favourable opportunity for carrying on an imposture. Yet in England, it seems, an opinion has prevailed with some, that an imposture has been carried on; that the poems which have been given to the world are no translations of the works of any old Gaelic bard, but modern compositions, formed, as it is said, upon a higher plan of poetry and sentiment than could belong to an age and a country reputed barbarous: and I have been called upon and urged to produce some evidence for satisfying the world that they are not the composi-

tions of Mr Macpherson himself, under the borrowed name of Ossian.

If the question had been concerning manuscripts brought from some distant or unknown region, with which we had no intercourse; or concerning translations from an Asiatic or American language which scarce any body understood, suspicions might naturally have arisen, and an author's assertions have been anxiously and scrupulously weighed. But in the case of a literal translation, professed to be given of old traditionary poems of our own country; of poems asserted to be known in the original to many thousand inhabitants of Great Britain, and illustrated too by many of their current tales and stories concerning them, such extreme scepticism is altogether out of place. For who would have been either so hardy or so stupid, as to attempt a forgery which could not have failed of being immediately detected? Either the author must have had the influence to engage, as confederates in the fraud, all the natives of the Highlands and Islands, dispersed as they are throughout every corner of the British dominions; or, we should, long ere this time, have heard their united voice exclaiming, "These are "not our poems, nor what we were ever accustomed "to hear from our bards or our fathers." Such remonstrances would, at least, have reached those who dwell in a part of the country which is adjacent to the Highlands; and must have come loud to the ears of such, especially, as were known to be the promoters of Mr Macpherson's undertaking. The silence of a whole country in this case, and of a country whose inhabitants are well known to be attached in a remarkable degree to all their own antiquities, is of as much weight as a thousand positive testimonies. And, surely, no person of common understanding would have adventured, as Mr Macpherson has done, in his dissertation on Temora, to engage in a controversy with the whole Irish nation concerning these poems, and to insist upon the honour of them being due to Scotland, if they had been mere forgeries of his own; which the Scots, in

place of supporting so ridiculous a claim, must have instantly rejected.

But as reasoning alone is apt not to make much impression, where suspicions have been entertained concerning a matter of fact, it was thought proper to have recourse to express testimonies. I have accordingly applied to several persons of credit and honour, both gentlemen of fortune, and clergymen of the established church, who are natives of the Highlands, or Islands of Scotland, and well acquainted with the language of the country, desiring to know their real opinion of the translations published by Mr Macpherson. Their original letters to me, in return, are in my possession. I shall give a fair and faithful account of the result of their testimony: and I have full authority to use the names of those gentlemen for what I now advance.

I must begin with affirming, that though among those with whom I have corresponded, some have had it in their power to be more particular and explicit in their testimony than others; there is not, however, one person, who insinuates the most remote suspicion that Mr Macpherson has either forged or adulterated any one of the poems he has published. If they make any complaints of him, it is on account of his having omitted other poems which they think of equal merit with any which he has published. They all, without exception, concur in holding his translations to be genuine, and proceed upon their authenticity as a fact acknowledged throughout all those northern provinces; assuring me that any one would be exposed to ridicule among them who should call it in question. I must observe, that I had no motive to direct my choice of the persons to whom I applied for information preferably to others, except their being pointed out to me as the persons in their different counties who were most likely to give light on this head.

With regard to the manner in which the originals of these poems have been preserved and transmitted, which has been represented as so mysterious and inexplicable, I have received the following plain account

that until the present century, almost every great family in the Highlands had their own bard, to whose office it belonged to be master of all the poems and songs of the country; that among these poems the works of Ossian are early distinguished from those of later bards, by several peculiarities in his style and manner; that Ossian has been always reputed the Homer of the Highlands, and all his compositions held in singular esteem and veneration; that the whole country is full of traditionary stories derived from his poems, concerning Fingal and his race of heroes, of whom there is not a child but has heard, and not a district in which there are not places pointed out famous for being the scene of some of their feats of arms; that it was wont to be the great entertainment of the Highlanders, to pass the winter evenings in discoursing of the times of Fingal, and rehearsing these old poems, of which they have been all along enthusiastically fond; that when assembled at their festivals, or any of their public occasions, wagers were often laid who could repeat most of them, and to have store of them in their memories was both an honourable and a profitable acquisition, as it procured them access into the families of their great men; that with regard to their antiquity, they are beyond all memory or tradition; insomuch that there is a word commonly used in the Highlands to this day, when they would express any thing which is of the most remote or unknown antiquity, importing that it belongs to the age of Fingal.

I am farther informed, that after the use of letters was introduced into that part of the country, the bards and others began early to commit several of those poems to writing; that old manuscripts of them, many of which are now destroyed or lost, are known and attested to have been in possession of some great families; and the most valuable of those that remained were collected by Mr Macpherson during his journey through that country; that though the poems of Ossian, so far as they were handed down by oral tradition, were no doubt liable to be interpolated, and to have their parts

disjoined and put out of their natural order, yet by comparing together the different oral editions of them (if we may use that phrase) in different corners of the country, and by comparing these also with the manuscripts which he obtained, Mr Macpherson had it in his power to ascertain, in a great measure, the genuine original, to restore the parts to their proper order, and to give the whole to the public in that degree of correctness in which it now appears.

I am also acquainted, that if inquiries had been made fifty or threescore years ago, many more particulars concerning these poems might have been learned, and many more living witnesses have been produced for attesting their authenticity; but that the manners of the inhabitants of the Highland countries have of late undergone a great change. Agriculture, trades, and manufactures, begin to take place of hunting, and the shepherd's life. The introduction of the busy and laborious arts has considerably abated that poetical enthusiasm which is better suited to a vacant and indolent state. The fondness of reciting their old poems decays; the custom of teaching them to their children is fallen into desuetude; and few are now to be found, except old men, who can rehearse from memory any considerable parts of them.

For these particulars, concerning the state of the Highlands and the transmission of Ossian's poems, I am indebted to the reverend and very learned and ingenious Mr John Macpherson, minister of Slate, in the island of Sky; and the reverend Mr Donald Macqueen, minister of Kilmuir, in Sky; Mr Donald Macleod, minister of Glenelg, in Inverness-shire; Mr Lewis Grant, minister of Duthel, in Inverness-shire; Mr Angus Macneil, minister of the island of South Uist; Mr Neil Macleod, minister of Ross, in the island of Mull; and Mr Alexander Macaulay, chaplain to the 88th regiment.

The honourable Colonel Hugh Mackay of Bighouse, in the shire of Sutherland; Donald Campbell of Airds, in Argyleshire, Esq; Æneas Mackintosh of Mackintosh,

in Inverness-shire, Esq. and Ronald Macdonell of Keappoch, in Lochaber, Esq. captain in the 87th regiment, commanded by Colonel Fraser, all concur in testifying that Mr Macpherson's collection consists of genuine Highland poems; known to them to be such, both from the general report of the country where they live, and from their own remembrance of the originals. Colonel Mackay asserts very positively, upon personal knowledge, that many of the poems published by Mr Macpherson are true and faithful translations. Mr Campbell declares that he has heard many of them, and Captain Macdonnel, that he has heard parts of every one of them recited in the original language.

James Grant of Rothiemurchus, Esq. and Alexander Grant of Delrachny, Esq. both in the shire of Inverness, desired to be named as vouchers for the poem of Fingal in particular. They remember to have heard it often in their younger days, and are positive that Mr Macpherson has given a just translation of it.

Lauchlan Macpherson of Strathmashie, in Inverness-shire, Esq. gives a very full and explicit testimony, from particular knowledge, in the following words: That in the year 1760, he accompanied Mr Macpherson during some part of his journey through the Highlands in search of the poems of Ossian; that he assisted him in collecting them; that he took down from oral tradition, and transcribed from old manuscripts, by far the greatest part of those pieces Mr Macpherson has published; that since the publication, he has carefully compared the translation with the copies of the originals in his hands; and that he finds it amazingly literal, even to such a degree as often to preserve the cadence of the Gaelic versification. He affirms, that among the manuscripts which were at that time in Mr Macpherson's possession, he saw one of as old a date as the year 1410.

Sir James Macdonald of Macdonald, in the island of Sky, Baronet, assured me, that after having made, at my desire, all the enquiries he could in his part of the country, he entertained no doubt that Mr Macpher-

son's collection consisted entirely of authentic Highland poems; that he had lately heard several parts of them repeated in the original, in the island of Sky; with some variations from the printed translation, such as might naturally be expected from the circumstances of oral tradition; and some parts, in particular the episode of Fainasollis, in the third book of Fingal, which agree literally with the translation; and added, that he had heard recitations of other poems not translated by Mr Macpherson, but generally reputed to be of Ossian's composition, which were of the same spirit and strain with such as are translated, and which he esteemed not inferior to any of them in sublimity of description, dignity of sentiment, or any other of the beauties of poetry. This last particular must have great weight, as it is well known how much the judgment of Sir James Macdonald deserves to be relied upon, in everything that relates to literature and taste.

The late reverend Mr Alexander Macfarlane, minister of Arrachar, in Dumbartonshire, who was remarkably eminent for his profound knowledge in Gaelic learning and antiquities, wrote to me soon after the publication of Mr Macpherson's work, terming it a masterly translation; informing me, that he had often heard several of these poems in the original, and remarked many passages so particularly striking beyond any thing he had ever read in any human composition, that he never expected to see a strength of genius able to do them that justice in a translation, which Mr Macpherson has done.

Norman Macleod of Macleod, in the island of Sky, Esq. Walter Macfarlane of Macfarlane, in Dumbartonshire, Esq. Mr Alexander Macmillan, deputy-keeper of his Majesty's signet, Mr Adam Fergusson, professor of moral philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, and many other gentlemen, natives of the Highland counties, whom I had occasion to converse with upon this subject, declare, that though they cannot now repeat from memory any of these poems in the original, yet from what they have heard in their youth, and from

the impression of the subject still remaining on their minds, they firmly believe those which Mr Macpherson has published, to be the old poems of Ossian current in the country.

Desirous, however, to have this translation particularly compared with the oral traditions of any who had parts of the original distinctly on their memory, I applied to several clergymen to make enquiry in their respective parishes concerning such persons; and to compare what they rehearsed with the printed version, Accordingly, from the reverend Mr John Macpherson, minister of Slate, in Sky; Mr Neil Macleod, minister of Ross, in Mull; Mr Angus Macneil, minister of South Uist; Mr Donald Macqueen, minister of Kilmuir, in Sky; and Mr Donald Macleod, minister of Glenelg; I have had reports on this head, containing distinct and explicit testimonies to almost the whole epic poem of Fingal, from beginning to end, and to several also of the lesser poems, as rehearsed in the original, in their presence, by persons whose names and places of abode they mention, and compared by themselves with the printed translation. They affirm, that in many places, what was rehearsed in their presence agreed literally and exactly with the translation. In some places they found variations from it, and variations even among different rehearsers of the same poem in the original; as words and stanzas omitted by some, which others repeated, and the order and connection in some places changed. But they remark, that those variations are on the whole not very material, and that Mr Macpherson seemed to them to follow the most just and authentic copy of the sense of his author. Some of these clergymen, particularly Mr Neil Macleod, can themselves repeat from memory, several passages of Fingal; the translation of which they assure me is exact. Mr Donald Macleod acquaints me, that it was in his house Mr Macpherson had the description of Cuthullin's horses and chariot, in the first book of Fingal, given him by Allan Macaskill, schoolmaster. Mr Angus Macneil writes, that Mr Macdonald, a

parishioner of his, declares, that he has often seen and read a great part of an ancient manuscript, once in the possession of the family of Clanronald, and afterwards carried to Ireland, containing many of these poems; and that he rehearsed before him several passages out of Fingal, which agreed exactly with Mr Macpherson's translation; that Neil Macmurrich, whose predecessors had for many generations been bards to the family of Clanronald, declared also in his presence, that he had often seen and read the same old manuscript; that he himself gave to Mr Macpherson a manuscript containing some of the poems which are now translated and published, and rehearsed before Mr Macneil, in in the original, the whole of the poem entitled Darthula, with very little variation from the printed translation. I have received the same testimony concerning this poem, Dar-thula, from Mr Macpherson, minister of S.ate; and in a letter communicated to me from Lieutenant Duncan Macnicol, of the 88th regiment, informing me of its being recited in the original, in their presence, from beginning to end: on which I lay the more stress, as any person of taste who turns to that poem, will see that it is one of the most highly finished in the whole collection, and most distinguished for poetical and sentimental beauties; insomuch, that whatever genius could produce, Darthula must be judged fully equal to any performance contained in Mr Macpherson's publication. I must add here, that though they who have compared the translation with what they have heard rehearsed of the original, bestow high praises both upon Mr Macpherson's genius and his fidelity; yet I find it to be their general opinion that in many places he has not been able to attain the strength and sublimity of the original which he copied.

I have authority to say, in the name of Lieutenant-Colonel Archibald Macnab, of the 88th regiment, or regiment of Highland Volunteers commanded by Colonel Campbell, that he has undoubted evidence of Mr Macpherson's collection being genuine, both fom what he well remembers to have heard in his youth, and

from his having heard very lately a considerable part of the poem of Temora rehearsed in the original, which agreed exactly with the printed version.

By the reverend Mr Alexander Pope, minister of Reay, in the shire of Caithness, I am informed, that twenty-four years ago, he had begun to make a collection of some of the old poems current in his part of the country; on comparing which with Mr Macpherson's work, he found in his collection the poem entitled The Battle of Lora, some parts of Lathmon, and the account of the death of Oscar. From the above-mentioned Lieutenant Duncan Macnicol, testimonies have been also received to a great part of Fingal, to part of Temora, and Carric-thura, as well as to the whole of Dar-thula, as recited in his presence in the original, compared, and found to agree with the translation.

I myself read over the greatest part of the English version of the six books of Fingal, to Mr Kenneth Macpherson of Stornway, in the Island of Lewis, merchant, in presence of the reverend Mr Alexander Macauly, chaplain to the 88th regiment. In going along, Mr Macpherson vouched what was read to be well known to him in the original, both the descriptions and the sentiments. In some places, though he remembered the story, he did not remember the words of the original; in other places, he remembered and repeated the Gaelic lines themselves, which, being interpreted to me by Mr Macauly, were found, upon comparison, to agree often literally with the printed version, and sometimes with slight variations of a word or an epithet. This testimony carried to me, and must have carried to any other who had been present, the highest conviction; being precisely a testimony of that nature which an Englishman well acquainted with Milton, or any favourite author, would give to a foreigner, who shewed him a version of this author into his own language, and wanted to be satisfied from what the Englishman could recollect of the original, whether it was really a translation of Paradise Lost, or a spurious work under that title, which had been put into his hands.

The above mentioned Mr Alexander Macauly, Mr Adam Fergusson, professor of moral philosophy, and Mr Alexander Fraser, governor to Francis Stuart, Esq. inform me, that at several different times they were with Mr Macpherson, after he had returned from his journey through the Highlands, and whilst he was employed in the work of translating, that they looked into his manuscripts, several of which had the appearance of being old; that they were fully satisfied of their being genuine Highland poems: that they compared the translation in many places with the original; and they attest it to be very just and faithful, and remarkably literal.

It has been thought worth while to bestow this attention on establishing the authenticity of the works of Ossian, now in possession of the public: because whatever rank they are allowed to hold as works of genius; whatever different opinions may be entertained concerning their poetical merit, they are unquestionably valuable in another view; as monuments of the taste and manners of an ancient age, as useful materials for enlarging our knowledge of the human mind and character; and must, beyond all dispute, be held as at least one of the greatest curiosities, which have at any time enriched the republic of letters. More testimonies to them might have been produced by a more enlarged correspondence with the Highland countries: but I apprehend, if any apology is necessary, it is for producing so many names, in a question where the consenting silence of a whole country, was to every unprejudiced person the strongest proof, that spurious compositions, in the name of that country, had not been obtruded upon the world.

FINGAL:

AN ANCIENT EPIC POEM.

IN SIX BOOKS.

The Argument.

Cuthullin (general of the Irish tribes, in the minority of Cormac, king of Ireland) sitting alone beneath a tree at the gate of Tura, a castle of Ulster, the other chiefs having gone on a hunting party to Cromla, a neighbouring hill, is informed of the landing of Swaran, king of Lochlin, by Moran, the son of Fithil, one of his scouts. He convenes the chiefs; a council is held, and disputes run high about giving battle to the enemy. Connal, the petty king of Tongorma, and an intimate friend of Cuthullin, was for retreating, till Fingal, king of those Caledonians who inhabited the north-west coast of Scotland, whose aid had been previously solicited, should arrive; but Calmar the son of Matha, lord of Lara, a country in Connaught, was for engaging the enemy immediately. Cuthullin, of himself willing to fight, went into the opinion of Calmar. Marching towards the enemy, he missed three of his bravest heroes, Fergus, Duchomar, and Cathbat. Fergus arriving, tells Cuthullin of the death of the two other chiefs; which introduces the affecting episode of Morna, the daughter of Cormac. The army of Cuthullin is descried at a distance by Swaran, who sent the son of Arno to observe the motions of the enemy, while he himself ranged his forces in order of battle. The son of Arno returning to Swaran, describes to him Cuthullin's chariot and the terrible appearance of that hero. The armies engage, but night coming on, leaves the victory undecided. Cuthullin, according to the hospitality of the times, sends to Swaran a formal invitation to a feast, by his bard Carril, the son of Kinfena. Swaran refuses to come. Carril relates to Cuthullin the story of Grudar and Brassolis. A party, by Connal's advice, is sent to observe the enemy; which closes the action of the first day.

BOOK I.

CUTHULLIN [a] sat by Tura's wall; by the tree of the rustling sound. His spear leaned against the mossy rock. His shield lay by him on the grass. As he thought of mighty Cairbar [b], a hero whom he slew in war, the scout [c] of the ocean came, Moran [d] the son of Fithil!

a Cuthullin or rather Cuth-Ullin, 'the voice of Ullin,' a poetical name given the son of Semo, grandson to Caithbat, a druid celebrated by the bards for his wisdom and and valour, from his commanding the forces of the province of Ulster against the Filong, or Belgæ, who were in possession of Connaught. Cuthullin, when very young, married Bragela, the daughter of Sorglan, and passing over into Ireland, lived for some time with Connal, grandson by a daughter to Caithbat the petty king of Ulster. His wisdom and valour in a short time gained him such reputation, that in the minority of Cormac the supreme king of Ireland, he was chosen guardian to the young king, and sole manager of the war against Swaran king of Lochlin. After a series of great actions he was killed in battle somewhere in Connaught, in the twenty-seventh year of his age. He was so remarkable for his strength, that to describe a strong man it has passed into a proverb, 'He has the strength of Cuthullin.' They show the remains of his palace at Dunscaith in the Isle of Sky; and a stone, to which he bound his dog Luath, goes still by his name.

b Cairbar, Cairbre, signifies a strong man

c We may conclude from Cuthullin's applying so early for foreign aid, that the Irish were not then so numerous as they have since been; which is a great presumption against the high antiquities of that people. We have the testimony of Tacitus, that one legion only was thought sufficient, in the time of Agricola, to reduce the whole island under the Roman yoke; which would not probably have been the case had the island been inhabited for any number of centuries before.

d Moran signifies many; and Fithil, or rather Fili, 'an inferior bard.'

" Rise," said the youth, " Cuthullin, rise; I see the ships of Swaran. Cuthullin, many are the foe; many the heroes of the dark-rolling sea."

Moran!" replied the blue-eyed chief, " thou ever tremblest, son of Fithil: thy fears have much increased the foe. Perhaps it is the king [e] of the lonely hills coming to aid me on green Ullin's plains."

" I saw their chief," says Moran, " tall as a rock of ice. His spear is like that blasted fir; his shield like the rising moon. He sat on a rock on the shore: his dark host rolled, like clouds, around him. Many, chief of men! I said, many are our hands of war. Well art though named, The Mighty Man; but many mighty men are seen from Tura's winding walls."

He answered, like a wave on a rock, " who in this land appears like me? Heroes stand not in my presence; they fall to earth beneath my hand. None can meet Swaran in the fight but Fingal, king of stormy hills. Once we wrestled on the heath of Malmor, [f] and our heels overturned the wood. Rocks fell from their place; and rivulets, changing their course, fled murmuring from our strife. Three days we renewed our strife, and heroes stood at a distance and trembled. On the fourth, Fingal says, that the king of the ocean fell; but Swaran says he stood. Let dark Cuthullin yield to him that is strong as the storms of Malmor.

" No!" replied the blue-eyed chief, " I will never yield to man! Dark Cuthullin shall be great or dead! Go, Fithil's son, and take my spear. Strike the sounding shield of Cabait [g]. It hangs at Tura's rustling gate; the sound of peace is not its voice. My heroes shall hear on the hill."

[e] Fingal the son of Comhal, and Morna the daughter of Thaddu. His grandfather was Trathal, and great-grandfather Trenmor, both of whom are often mentioned in the poem. Trenmor, according to tradition, had two sons; Trathal who succeeded him in the kingdom of Morven, and Connar, called by the bards Connar the Great, who was elected king of all Ireland, and was the ancestor of that Cormac who sat on the Irish throne when the invasion of Swaran happened. It may not be improper here to observe, that the accent ought always to be placed on the last syllable of Fingal.

[f] Meal-mor, 'a great hill.'

[g] Cabait, or rather Caithbat, grandfather to the hero, was so remarkable for his valour, that his shield was made use of to alarm his posterity to the battles of the family. We find Fingal making the same use of his own shield in the 4th book. A horn was the most common instrument to call the army together, before the invention of bag pipes.

He went and struck the bossy shield. The hills and their rocks replied. The sound spread along the wood: deer start by the lake of roes. Curach[h] leapt from the sounding rock: and Connal of the bloody spear. Crugal's[i] breast of snow beats high. The son of Favi leaves the dark-brown hind It is the shield of war, said Ronnar! The spear of Cuthullin, said Lugar! Son of the sea, put on thy arms! Calmar, lift thy sounding steel! Puno, dreadful hero, rise! Cairbar from thy red tree of Cromla! Bend they white knee, O Eth! and descend from the streams of Lena. Ca-olt stretch thy white side as thou movest along the whistling heath of Mora: thy side that is white as the foam of the troubled sea, when the dark winds pour it on the murmuring rocks of Cuthon[k].

Now I behold the chiefs, in the pride of their former deeds! Their souls are kindled at the battles of old, and the actions of other times. Their eyes are like flames of fire, and roll in search of the foes of the land. Their mighty hands are on their swords. And lightning pours from their sides of steel. They come like streams from the mountains; each rushes roaring from his hill. Bright are the chiefs of battle, in the armour of their fathers. Gloomy and dark their heroes follow like the gathering of the rainy clouds behind the red meteors of heaven. The sounds of crashing arms ascend. The grey dogs howl between. Unequally bursts the song of battle. And rocking Cromla[l] echoes round. On Lena's dusky heath they stand, like mist[m] that shades the hills of autumn: when broken and dark it settles high and lifts its head to heaven!

"Hail," said Cuthullin, "sons of the narrow vales! hail, ye hunters of the deer! Another sport is drawing near: it is like the dark rolling of that wave on the

h Cu-raoch signifies the madness of battle.
i C[illegible] 'fair [illegible] lexiomed.'
k C[illegible], 'the mournful [illegible] of waves.'
l [illegible] signified a place of worship among the druids. It is here the proper name of a [illegible] of Ullin, or Ulster
m [illegible] array,
A [illegible] display,
T[illegible] and still
Rest on the summit of the shaded hill. POPE.

coast! Shall we fight, ye sons of war! or yield green Inisfail[n] to Lochlin! O Connal[o], speak thou first of men! thou breaker of the shields! thou hast often fought with Lochlin: wilt thou lift thy father's spear?"

"Cuthullin!" calm the chief replied, "the spear of Connal is keen. It delights to shine in battle, and to mix with the blood of thousands. But though my hand is bent on war, my heart is for the peace of Erin[p]. Behold, thou first in Cormac's war, the sable fleet of Swaran. His masts are as numerous on our coast as reeds in the lake of Lego. His ships are like forests clothed with mist, when the trees yield by turns to the squally wind. Many are his chiefs in battle. Connal is for peace! Fingal would shun his arm, the first of mortal men! Fingal who scatters the mighty, as stormy winds the heath, when the streams roar through echoing Cona, and night settles with all her clouds on the hill!"

"Fly, thou chief of peace," said Calmar[q], the son of Matha; "fly, Connal, to thy silent hills, where the spear of battle never shone! Pursue the dark-brown deer of Cromla: and stop with thine arrows the bounding roes of Lena. But blue-eyed son of Semo, Cuthullin, ruler of the war, scatter thou the sons of Lochlin[r]! and roar through the ranks of their pride. Let no vessel of the kingdom of snow bound on the dark-rolling waves of Inistore[s]. O ye dark winds of Erin rise! roar ye whirlwinds of the heath! Amidst the tempest let me die, torn in a cloud by angry ghosts of men; amidst the tempest let Calmar die, if ever chase was sport to him, so much as the battle of shields."

n Ireland, so called from a colony who settled there, called Falans. Inisfail, i. e. the island of the Fa-il, or Falans.

o Connal, the friend of Cuthullin, was the son of Caithbat, prince of Tongorma, or the island of blue waves, probably one of the Hebrides. His mother was Fion-coma the daughter of Congal. He had a son by Foba of Conachar-nessar, who was afterwards king of Ulster. For his services in the war against Swaran, he had lands conferred on him, which, from his name, were called Tir-chonnuil or Tirconnel, i. e. the land of Connal.

p Erin, a name of Ireland; from 'ear' or 'iar' west, and 'in' an island. This name was not always confined to Ireland, for there is the highest probability that the Ierne of the ancients was Britain to the north of the Forth. For Ierne is said to be the north of Britain, which could not be meant of Ireland. Strabo, lib. 2. et 4. Casaub. lib. 1.

q Calm-er, 'a strong man.'

r The Gaelic name of Scandinavia in general; in a more confined sense, that of the peninsula of Jutland.

s Inistore, 'the island of whales,' the ancient name of the Orkney islands.

"Calmar!" slow replied the chief, "I never fled, O son of Matha! I was swift with my friends in battle; but small is the fame of Connal! The battle was won in my presence; and the valiant overcame! But, son of Semo, hear my voice, regard the ancient throne of Cormac. Give wealth and half the land for peace, till Fingal come with battle. Or, if war be thy choice, I lift the sword and spear. My joy shall be in the midst of thousands; and my soul brighten in the gloom of the fight!"

"To me," Cuthullin replies, "pleasant is the noise of arms! pleasant as the thunder of heaven before the shower of spring! But gather all the shining tribes, that I may view the sons of war! Let them move along the heath; bright as the sun-shine before a storm; when the west wind collects the clouds, and the oaks of Morven echo along the shore."

"But where are my friends in battle? The companions of my arm in danger? Where art thou, white-bosomed Cathbat? Where is that cloud in war Duchomar[t]? And hast thou left me, O Fergus[u]! in the day of the storm? Fergus, first in our joy at the feast! son of Rossa! arm of death! comest thou like a roe[v] from Malmor? like a hart from the echoing hills? Hail, thou son of Rossa! What shades the soul of war?"

"Four stones[w]," replied the chief, "rise on the grave of Cathbat. These hands have laid in earth Duchomar, that cloud in war! Cathbat, son of Torman, thou wert a sun-beam on the hill. And thou, O valiant Duchomar, like the mist of the marshy Lano, when it sails over the plains of autumn, and brings death to the people. Morna, fairest of maids! calm is thy sleep in the cave of the rock. Thou hast fallen in darkness like a

t Dubhcomar, 'a black well-shaped man.'

u Fear-guth, 'the man of the word;' or a commander of an army.

v Be thou like a roe or young hart on the mountains of Bether. Solomon's Song.

w This passage alludes to the manner of burial among the ancient Scots. They opened a grave six or eight feet deep: the bottom was lined with fine clay; and on this they laid the body of the deceased, and, if a warrior, his sword, and the heads of twelve arrows by his side. Above they laid another stratum of clay, in which they placed the horn of a deer, the symbol of hunting. The whole was covered with a fine mold, and four stones placed on end to mark the extent of the grave. These are the four stones alluded to here.

star, that shoots across the desart, when the traveller is alone, and mourns the transient beam."

"Say," said Semo's blue-eyed son, "say, how fell the chiefs of Erin? Fell they by the sons of Lochlin, striving in the battle of heroes? Or what confines the chiefs of Cromla to the dark and narrow house[x]?"

"Cathbat," replied the hero, "fell by the sword of Duchomar at the oak of the noisy streams. Duchomar came to Tura's cave, and spoke to the lovely Morna:"

"Morna[y], fairest among women, lovely daughter of Cormac-cairbar, why in the circle of stones, in the cave of the rock alone? The stream murmurs hoarsely. The old trees groan in the wind. The lake is troubled before thee, and dark are the clouds of the sky. But thou art like snow on the heath; and thy hair like the mist of Cromla, when it curls on the rocks, and shines to the beam of the west. Thy breasts are like two smooth rocks seen from Brano of the streams; thy arms like two white pillars in the halls of the mighty Fingal."

"From whence," the white-armed maid replied, "from whence, Duchomar, the most gloomy of men? Dark are thy brows and terrible. Red are thy rolling eyes. Does Swaran appear on the sea? What of the foe, Duchomar?"

"From the hill I return, O Morna, from the hill of the dark-brown hinds. Three have I slain with my bended yew. Three with my long-bounding dogs of the chase. Lovely daughter of Cormac, I love thee as my soul. I have slain one stately deer for thee. High was his branchy head; and fleet his feet of wind."

"Duchomar!" calm the maid replied, "I love thee not, thou gloomy man; hard is thy heart of rock, and dark thy terrible brow. But Cathbat, son of Torman[z], thou art the love of Morna. Thou art like a sun-beam on the hill in the day of the gloomy storm. Sawest thou the son of Torman, lovely on the hill of his hinds? Here the daughter of Cormac waits the coming of Cathbat."

x The grave. The house appointed for all living. JOB.
y Muirne, or Morna, 'a woman beloved by all.'
z Torman, 'thunder.' This is the true origin of the Jupiter Taranis of the ancients.

" And long shall Morna wait," Duchomar said, " his blood is on my sword. Long shall Morna wait for him. He fell at Brano's stream. High on Cromla I will raise his tomb, daughter of Cormac-cairbar; but fix thy love on Duchomar, his arm is strong as a storm."

" And is the son of Torman fallen?" said the maid of the tearful eye. " Is he fallen on his echoing heath; the youth with the breast of snow? he that was first in the chase of the hill? the foe of the strangers of the ocean? Duchomar, thou art dark [a] indeed, and cruel is thy arm to Morna. But give me that sword, my foe! I love the blood of Cathbat."

He gave the sword to her tears. But she pierced his manly breast! He fell, like the bank of a mountain-stream; and stretching out his arm he said—

" Daughter of Cormac-cairbar, thou hast slain Duchomar. The sword is cold in my breast: Morna, I feel it cold. Give me to Moina [b] the maid; Duchomar was the dream of her night. She will raise my tomb; and the hunter shall see it and praise me. But draw the sword from my breast, Morna, the steel is cold."

She came, in all her tears, she came, and drew it from his breast. He pierced her white side with steel; and spread her fair locks on the ground. Her bursting blood sounds from her side: and her white arm is stained with red. Rolling in death she lay, and Tura's cave answered to her groans.

" Peace," said Cuthullin, " to the souls of the heroes; their deeds were great in danger. Let them ride around [c] me on clouds, and show their features of war; that my soul may be strong in danger, my arm like the thunder of heaven.—But be thou on a moon-beam, O Morna, near the window of my rest; when my thoughts are of peace, and the din of arms is over.—Gather the strength of the tribes, and move to the wars of Erin—Attend the car of my battles; rejoice in the

a She alludes to his name, the dark man.

b Moina, 'soft in temper and person.'

c It was the opinion then, as it is indeed to this day, of some of the Highlanders, that the soul of the deceased hovered round their living friends; and sometimes appeared to them when they were about to enter on any great undertaking.

noise of my course. Place three spears by my side; follow the bounding of my steeds; that my soul may be strong in my friends, when the battle darkens round the beams of my steel."

As rushes a stream[d] of foam from the dark shady steep of Cromla, when the thunder is rolling above, and dark-brown night rests on half the hill; so fierce, so vast, so terrible, rushed on the sons of Erin. The chief, like a whale of ocean, whom all his billows follow, poured valour forth as a stream, rolling his might along the shore.

The sons of Lochlin heard the noise as the sound of a winter-stream. Swaran struck his bossy shield, and called the son of Arno. "What murmur rolls along the hill, like the gathered flies of evening? The sons of Inisfail descend, or rustling winds roar in the distant wood. Such is the noise of Gormal before the white tops of my waves arise. O son of Arno, ascend the hill and view the dark face of the heath."

He went, and trembling, swift returned. His eyes rolled wildly round. His heart beat high against his side. His words were faultering, broken, slow.

"Rise, son of ocean, rise, chief of the dark-brown shields; I see the dark, the mountain-stream of the battle, the deep-moving strength of the sons of Erin.—The car, the car of battle comes, like the flame of death: the rapid car of Cuthullin, the noble son of Semo. It bends behind like a wave near a rock; like the golden mist of the heath. Its sides are embossed with stones, and sparkle like the sea round the boat of night. Of polished yew is its beam, and its seat of the smoothest bone. The sides are replenished with spears; and the bottom is the footstool of heroes. Before the right side of the car is seen the snorting horse. The high-maned, broad-breasted, proud, high-leaping, strong steed of the hill. Loud and resounding is his hoof; the spreading of his mane above is like that stream of smoke on the

d As torrents roll, increas'd by numerous rills,
With rage impetuous down their ecl.oing hills;
Rush to the vales, and, pour'd along the plain,
Roar thro' a thousand channels to the main. POPE.

heath. Bright are the sides of the steed, and his name is Sulin-Sifadda.

" Before the left side of the car is seen the snorting horse. The dark-maned, high-headed, strong-hoofed, fleet, bounding son of the hill: his name is Dusronnal among the stormy sons of the sword. A thousand thongs bind the car on high. Hard polished bits shine in a wreath of foam. Thin thongs bright-studded with gems, bend on the stately necks of the steeds. The steeds that like wreaths of mist fly over the streamy vales. The wildness of deer is in their course, the strength of the eagle descending on her prey. Their noise is like the blast of winter on the sides of the snow-headed Gormal[e].

" Within the car is seen the chief; the strong stormy son of the sword; the hero's name is Cuthullin, son of Semo, king of shells. His red cheek is like my polished yew. The look of his blue-rolling eye is wide beneath the dark arch of his brow. His hair flies from his head like a flame, as bending forward he wields the spear. Fly, king of ocean, fly; he comes, like a storm along the streamy vale."

" When did I fly," replied the king, " from the battle of many spears? When did I fly, son of Arno, chief of the little soul? I met the storm of Gormal when the foam of my waves was high; I met the storm of the clouds, and shall I fly from a hero? Were it Fingal himself, my soul should not darken before him.—Rise to the battle, my thousands; pour round me like the echoing main. Gather round the bright steel of your king; strong as the rocks of my land, that meet the storm with joy, and stretch their dark woods to the wind."

As autumn's[f] dark storms pour from two echoing

[e] A hill of Lochlin.

[f] The reader may compare this passage with a similar one in Homer. Iliad 4. v. 446.

Now shield with shield, with helmet helmet clos'd,
To armour armour, lance to lance oppos'd.
Host against host with shadowy squadrons drew,
The sounding darts in iron tempests flew;
With streaming blood the slipp'ry fields are dy'd,
And slaughter'd heroes swell the dreadful tide. POPE.

Arms to armour crashing, bray'd
Horrible discord, and the madding wheels
Of brazen chariots rag'd, &c. MILTON.

hills, towards each other approached the heroes.—As two dark streams from high rocks meet, and mix and roar on the plain; loud, rough, and dark in battle meet Lochlin and Inisfail. Chief mixes his strokes with chief, and man with man; steel. clanging, sounded on steel; helmets are cleft on high. Blood bursts and smokes around. Strings twang on the polished yews. Darts rush along the sky. Spears fall like the circles of light that gild the stormy face of night.

As the troubled noise of the ocean when roll the waves on high: as the last peal of the thunder of heaven, such is the noise of battle. Though Cormac' hundred bards were there to give the war to song feeble were the voices of an hundred bards to send the deaths to future times. For many were the falls of the heroes; and wide poured the blood of the valiant.

Mourn, ye sons of song, the death of the noble Sithallins. Let the sighs of Fiona rise on the dark heath of her lovely Ardan. They fell, like two hinds of the desert, by the hands of the mighty Swaran; when, in the midst of thousands he roared; like the shrill spirit of a storm, that sits dim on the clouds of Gormal, and enjoys the death of the mariner.

Nor slept thy hand by thy side, chief of the Isle of Mist[b]; many were the deaths of thine arm, Cuthullin thou son of Semo. His sword was like the beam of heaven when it pierces the sons of the vale; when the people are blasted and fall, and all the hills are burning around. Dusronnal[i] snorted over the bodies of heroes and Sifadda[k] bathed his hoof in blood. The battle lay behind them as groves over turned in the desert of Cromla, when the blast has passed the heath laden with the spirits of night.

Weep on the rocks of roaring winds, O maid of Inistore[l]; bend thy fair head over the waves, thou fair

g Sithallin signifies a handsome man: Fiona, 'a fair maid;' and Ardan, 'pride.'

b The Isle of Sky; not improperly called the Isle of Mist, as its high hills, which catch the clouds from the western ocean, occasion almost continual rains.

i One of Cuthullin's horses. Dubhstron-gheal

k Sith-fadda, i. e. a long stride.

l The maid of Inistore was the daughter of Gorlo king of Inistore, or Orkney island. Trenar was brother to the king of Iniscon, supposed to be one of the islands of Shetland. The Orkneys and Shetland were at that time subject to the king of Lochlin.

than the spirit of the hills, when it moves in a sunbeam at noon over the silence of Morven. He is fallen! thy youth is low; pale beneath the sword of Cuthullin. No more shall valour raise the youth to match the blood of kings. Trenar, lovely Trenar died, thou maid of Inistore. His grey dogs are howling at home, and see his passing ghost. His bow is in the hall unstrung. No sound is in the heath of his hinds.

As roll a thousand waves on a rock, so Swaran's host came on; as meets a rock a thousand waves, so Inisfail met Swaran. Death raises all his voices around, and mixes with the sound of their shields. Each hero is a pillar of darkness, and the sword a beam of fire in his hand. The field echoes from wing to wing, as a hundred hammers that rise by turns on the red son of the furnace.

Who are these on Lethan's heath that are so gloomy and dark? Who are these like two clouds[m], and their words like lightning above them? The little hills are troubled around, and the rocks tremble with all their moss. Who is it but Ocean's son and the car-borne chief of Erin? Many are the anxious eyes of their friends, as they see them dim on the heath. Now night conceals the chiefs in her clouds, and ends the terrible fight.

It was on Cromla's shaggy side that Dorglas placed the deer[n]; the early fortune of the chase, before the heroes left the hill. A hundred youths collect the heath; ten heroes blow the fire; three hundred chuse the polished stones. The feast is smoking wide.

and that the dogs of Trenar are sensible at home of the death of their master, the very instant he is killed. It was the opinion of the times, that the souls of heroes went immediately after death to the hills of their country, and the scenes they frequented in the most happy time of their life. It was thought too that dogs and horses saw the ghosts of the deceased.

m As when two black clouds
With Heav'n's artillery fraught, comes rattling on
Over the Caspian. MILTON.

n The ancient manner of preparing feasts after hunting, is handed down by tradition. A pit lined with smooth stones was made; and near it stood a heap of smooth flat stones of the flint kind. The stones, as well as the pit, were properly heated with heath. Then they laid some venison in the bottom, and a stratum of the stones above it; and thus they did alternately till the pit was full. The whole was covered over with heath to confine the steam. Whether this is probable I cannot say; but some pits are shown, which the vulgar say were used in that manner.

Cuthullin, chief of Erin's war, resumed his mighty soul. He stood upon his beamy spear, and spoke to the son of songs; to Carril of other times, the grey-haired son of Kisfena*. "Is this feast spread for me alone; and the king of Lochlin on Ullin's shore, far from the deer of his hills, and sounding halls of his feasts! Rise, Carril of other times, and carry my words to Swaran; tell him that came from the roaring of waters, that Cuthullin gives his feast. Here let him listen to the sound of my groves amidst the clouds of night. For cold and bleak the blustering winds rush over the foam of his seas. Here let him praise the trembling harp, and hear the songs of heroes."

Old Carril went, with softest voice, and called the king of dark brown shields. "Rise from the skins of thy chase, rise Swaran, king of groves. Cuthullin gives the joy of shells; partake the feast of Erin's blue-eyed chief." He answered like the sullen sound of Cromla before a storm. "Though all thy daughters, Inisfail, should extend their arms of snow, raise high the heavings of their breasts, and softly roll their eyes of love; yet, fixed as Lochlin's thousand rocks, here Swaran shall remain; till morn, with the young beams of the east, shall light me to the death of Cuthullin. Pleasant to my ear is Lochlin's wind. It rushes over my seas. It speaks aloft in all my shrouds, and brings my green forests to my mind; the green forests of Gormal that often echoed to my winds, when my spear was red in the chase of the boar. Let dark Cuthullin yield to me the ancient throne of Cormac: or Erin's torrents shall show from their hills the red foam of the blood of his pride."

"Sad is the sound of Swaran's voice," said Carril of other times: "Sad to himself alone," said the blue-eyed son of Semo. "But, Carril, raise thy voice on high, and tell the deeds of other times. Send thou the night away in song; and give the joy of grief. For many heroes and maids of love have moved on Inisfail. And lovely are the songs of woe that are heard on Albion's rocks; when the noise of the chase is over

* Ceon-feana, i. e. the head of the people.

and the streams of Cona answer to the voice of Ossian[p]."

"In other days[q]," Carril replies, "came the sons of ocean to Erin. A thousand vessels bounded over the waves to Ullin's lovely plains. The sons of Inisfail arose to meet the race of dark-brown shields. Cairbar, first of men, was there, and Grudar stately youth. Long had they strove for the spotted bull, that lowed on Gulbon's[r] echoing heath. Each claimed him as his own; and death was often at the point of their steel. Side by side the heroes fought, and the strangers of ocean fled. Whose name was fairer on the hill, than the name of Cairbar and Grudar? But ah! why ever lowed the bull on Golbun's echoing heath? They saw him leaping like the snow. The wrath of the chiefs returned."

"On Lubar's[s] grassy banks they fought, and Grudar like a sun-beam fell. Fierce Cairbar came to the vale of the echoing Tura, where Brassolis[t], fairest of his sisters, all alone, raised the song of grief. She sung of the actions of Grudar, the youth of her secret soul. She mourned him in the field of blood: but still she hoped for his return. Her white bosom is seen from her robe, as the moon from the clouds of night. Her voice was softer than the harp to raise the song of grief. Her soul was fixed on Grudar; the secret look of her eye was his. When shalt thou come in thine arms, thou mighty in war?"

"Take, Brassolis," Cairbar came and said, "take, Brassolis, this shield of blood. Fix it on high within my hall, the armour of my foe.' Her soft heart beat against her side. Distracted, pale, she flew. She found her youth in all his blood! She died on Cromla's heath.

p Ossian the son of Fingal and author of the Poem. One cannot but admire the address of the poet in putting his own praise so naturally in the mouth of Cuthullin. The Cona here mentioned is perhaps that small river that runs through Glenco in Argyleshire. One of the hills which environ that romantic valley is still called Scornafena, or the hill of Fingal's people.

q This episode is introduced with propriety. Calmar and Connal, two of the Irish heroes, had disputed warmly before the battle about engaging the enemy. Carril endeavours to reconcile them with the story of Cairbar and Grudar; who though enemies before, fought side by side in the war. The poet obtained his aim, for we find Calmar and Connal perfectly reconciled in the third book.

r Gol-bhean, as well as Cromleach, signifies a crooked hill. It is here the name of a mountain in the county of Sligo.

s Lubar, a river in Ulster. Labhar, 'loud, noisy.'

t Brassolis signifies a woman with a white breast.

Here rests their dust, Cuthullin; and these two lonely yews, sprung from their tombs, wish to meet on high. Fair was Brassolis on the plain, and Grudar on the hill. The bard shall preserve their names, and repeat them to future times."

"Pleasant is thy voice, O Carril," said the blue-eyed chief of Erin. "Lovely are the words of other times. They are like the calm shower[u] of spring, when the sun looks on the field, and the light cloud flies over the hills. O strike the harp in praise of my love, the lonely sun-beam of Dunscaich. Strike the harp in the praise of Bragela[v], of her that I left in the Isle of Mist, the spouse of Semo's son. Dost thou raise thy fair face from the rock to find the sails of Cuthullin? The sea is rolling far distant, and its white foam shall deceive thee for my sails. Retire, for it is night, my love, and the dark winds sigh in thy hair. Retire to the hall of my feasts, and think of the times that are past: for I will not return till the storm of war is ceased. O Connal, speak of wars and arms, and send her from my mind: for lovely with her raven-hair is the white-bosomed daughter of Sorglan."

Connal, slow to speak, replied, "Guard against the race of Ocean. Send thy troop of night abroad, and watch the strength of Swaran. Cuthullin! I am for peace till the race of the desart come; till Fingal come, the first of men, and beam, like the sun, on our fields."

The hero struck the shield of his alarms; the warriors of the night moved on. The rest lay in the heath of the deer, and slept amidst the dusky wind. The ghosts[w] of the lately dead were near, and swam on gloomy clouds. And far distant in the dark silence of Lena, the feeble voices were heard.

[u] But when he speaks, what elocution flows!
Like the soft fleeces of descending snows. POPE.

[v] Bragela was the daughter of Sorglan, and the wife of Cuthullin. Cuthullin, upon the death of Artho, supreme king of Ireland, passed over into Ireland, probably by Fingal's order, to take upon him the administration of affairs in that kingdom, during the minority of Cormac the son of Artho. He left his wife Bragela in Dunscaich, the seat of the family, in the Isle of Sky.

[w] It was long the opinion of the ancient Scots, that a ghost was heard shrieking near the place where a death was to happen soon after. The accounts given to this day among the vulgar of this extraordinary matter, are very poetical. The ghost comes mounted on a meteor, and surrounds twice or thrice the place destined for the person to die; and then goes along the road through which the funeral is to pass, shrieking at intervals; at last the meteor and ghost disappear above the burial-ground.

FINGAL.

The Argument.

The ghost of Crugal, one of the Irish heroes who was killed in battle, appearing to Connal, foretells the defeat of Cuthullin in the next battle; and earnestly advises him to make peace with Swaran. Connal communicates the vision; but Cuthullin is inflexible; from a principle of honour he would not be the first to sue for peace, and he resolved to continue the war. Morning comes: Swaran proposes dishonourable terms to Cuthullin, which are rejected. The battle begins, and is obstinately fought for some time, until, upon the flight of Grumla, the whole Irish army give way. Cuthullin and Connal cover their retreat: Carril leads them to a neighbouring hill, whither they are soon followed by Cuthullin himself, who descries the fleet of Fingal making towards the coast: but night coming on, he lost sight of it again. Cuthullin, dejected after his defeat, attributes his ill success to the death of Ferda his friend, whom he had killed some time before. Carril, to show that ill success did not always attend those who innocently killed their friends, introduces the episode of Comal and Galvina.

BOOK II.

CONNAL* lay by the sound of the mountain-stream, beneath the aged tree. A stone, with its moss, supported his head. Shrill through the heath of Lena he heard the voice of night. At distance from the heroes he lay; for the son of the sword feared no foe.

My hero saw in his rest a dark-red stream of fire coming down from the hill. Crugal sat upon the beam,

* The scene of Connal's repose is familiar to those who have been inthe Highlands of Scotland. The poet removes him to a distance from the army, to add more horror to the description of Crugal's ghost, by the loneliness of the place. It perhaps will not be disagreeable to the reader, to see how two other ancient poets handled a similar subject.

When lo! the shade, before his closing eyes,
Of sad Patroclus rose, or seem'd to rise,
In the same robe he living wore, he came,
In stature, voice, and pleasing look the same.
The form familiar hover'd o'er his head,
And sleeps Achilles thus? the phantom said. POPE.

When Hector's ghost before my sight appears:
A bloody shroud he seem'd, and bath'd in tears.
Such as he was, when, by Pelides slain,
Thessalian coursers dragg'd him o'er the plain.
Swol'n were his feet, as when the thongs were thrust
Through the bor'd holes, his body black with dust
Unlike that Hector, who return'd from toils
Of war triumphant, in Æacian spoils:
Or him, who made the fainting Greeks retire,
And launch'd against their navy Phrygian fire.
His hair and beard stood stiffen'd with his gore;
And all the wounds he for his country bore. DRYDEN.

a chief that lately fell. He fell by the hand of Swaran, striving in the battle of heroes. His face is like the beam of the setting moon: his robes are of the clouds of the hill: his eyes are like two decaying flames. Dark is the wound of his breast.

"Crugal," said the mighty Connal, "son of Dedgal, famed on the hill of the deer. Why so pale and sad, thou breaker of the shields? Thou hast never been pale for fear. What disturbs the son of the hill?"

Dim, and in tears, he stood and stretched his pale hand over the hero. Faintly he raised his feeble voice, like the gale of the reedy Lego.

"My ghost, O Connal, is on my native hills; but my corse is on the sands of Ullin. Thou shalt never talk with Crugal, or find his lone steps in the heath. I am light as the blast of Cromla, and I move like the shadow of mist. Connal[y], son of Colgar, I see the dark cloud of death: it hovers over the plains of Lena. The sons of green Erin shall fall. Remove from the field of ghosts." Like the darkened moon[z] he retired, in the midst of the whistling blast.

"Stay," said the mighty Connal, "stay my dark-red friend. Lay by that beam of heaven, son of the windy Cromla. What cave of the hill is thy lonely house? What green-headed hill is the place of thy rest? Shall we not hear thee in the storm? in the noise of the mountain-stream? When the feeble sons of the wind come forth, and ride on the blast of the desart?"

The soft-voiced Connal rose in the midst of his sounding arms. He struck his shield above Cuthullin. The son of battle waked.

"Why," said the ruler of the car, "comes Connal, through the night? My spear might turn against the sound; and Cuthullin mourn the death of his friend. Speak, Connal, son of Colgar, speak, thy counsel is like the sun of heaven."

y Connal the son of Caithbat, the friend of Cuthullin, is sometimes, as here, called the son of Colgar; from one of that name who was the founder of his family.

z Like a thin smoke he sees the spirit fly:
And hears a feeble lamentable cry.

DENHAM and DICKSON OF OSSIAN's POEMS.

Drawn by R. Corbould

Engraved by J. Storer, London

"Son of Semo," replied the chief, "the ghost of Crugal came from the cave of his hill. The stars dim-twinkled through his form; and his voice was like the sound of a distant stream. He is a messenger of death. He speaks of the dark and narrow house. Sue for peace, O chief of Dunscaich; or fly over the heath of Lena."

"He spoke to Connal," replied the hero, "though stars dim-twinkled through his form. Son of Colgar, it was the wind that murmured in the caves of Lena. Or if it was the form[a] of Crugal, why didst thou not force him to my sight? Hast thou enquired where is his cave? The house of the son of the wind? My sword might find that voice, and force his knowledge from him. And small is his knowledge, Connal, for he was here to-day. He could not have gone beyond our hills, and who can tell him there of our death?"

"Ghosts fly on clouds, and ride on winds," said Connal's voice of wisdom. "They rest together in their caves, and talk of mortal men."

"Then let them talk of mortal men; of every man but Erin's chief. Let me be forgot in their cave; for I will not fly from Swaran. If I must fall, my tomb shall rise amidst the fame of other times. The hunter shall shed a tear on my stone; and sorrow dwell round the high-bosomed Bragela. I fear not death, but I fear to fly; for Fingal saw me often victorious. Thou dim phantom of the hill, show thyself to me! come on thy beam of heaven, and show me my death in thine hand; yet will I not fly, thou feeble son of the wind. Go, son of Colgar, strike the shield of Caithbat; it hangs between the spears. Let my heroes rise to the sound in the midst of the battles of Erin. Though Fingal delays his coming with the race of the stormy hills, we shall fight, O Colgar's son, and die in the battle of heroes."

[a] The poet teaches us the opinion that prevailed in his time concerning the state of separate souls. From Connal's expression, "That the stars dim-twinkled through the "form of Crugal," and Cuthullin's reply, we may gather that they both thought the soul was material.

The sound spreads wide; the heroes rise, like the breaking of a blue-rolling wave. They stood on the heath, like oaks with all their branches round them[b], when they echo to the stream of frost, and their withered leaves rustle to the wind.

High Cromla's head of clouds is grey; the morning trembles on the half-enlightened ocean. The blue-grey mist swims slowly by, and hides the sons of Inisfail.

"Rise ye," said the king of the dark-brown shields, "ye that came from Lochlin's waves. The sons of Erin have fled from our arms—pursue them over the plains of Lena. And Morla, go to Cormac's hall and bid them yield to Swaran; before the people shall fall into the tomb, and the hills of Ullin be silent." They rose like a flock of sea-fowl when the waves expel them from the shore. Their sound was like a thousand streams that meet in Cona's vale, when after a stormy night, they turn their dark eddies beneath the pale light of the morning.

As the dark shades of autumn fly over the hills of grass; so gloomy, dark, successive, came the chiefs of Lochlin's echoing woods. Tall as the stag of Morven, moved on the king of groves. His shining shield is on his side like a flame on the heath at night, when the world is silent and dark, and the traveller sees some ghost sporting in the beam.

A blast from the troubled ocean removed the settled mist. The sons of Inisfail appear like a ridge of rocks on the shore.

"Go, Morla, go," said Lochlin's king, "and offer peace to these. Offer the terms we give to kings when nations bow before us; when the valiant are dead in war, and the virgins weeping on the field."

Great Morla came, the son of Swart, and stately strode the king of shields. He spoke to Erin's blue-eyed son, among the lesser heroes.

b As when heav'n's fire
Hath scath'd the forest oaks or mountain pines
With singed tops, their stately growth, though bare,
Stand on the blasted heath. MILTON.

"Take Swaran's peace," the warrior spoke, "the peace he gives to kings, when the nations bow before him. Leave Ullin's lovely plains to us, and give thy spouse and dog. Thy spouse high-bosomed, heaving fair. Thy dog that overtakes the wind. Give these to prove the weakness of thine arms, and live beneath our power."

"Tell Swaran, tell that heart of pride, that Cuthullin never yields. I give him the dark-blue rolling of ocean, or I give his people graves in Erin! never shall a stranger have the lovely sun-beam of Dunscaich; nor ever deer fly on Lochlin's hills before the nimble-footed Luath."

"Vain ruler of the car," said Morla, "wilt thou fight the king; that king whose ships of many groves could carry off thine isle; so little is thy green-hilled Ullin to the king of stormy waves."

"In words I yield to many, Morla, but this sword shall yield to none. Erin shall own the sway of Cormac, while Connal and Cuthullin live. O Connal, first of mighty men, thou hast heard the words of Morla; shall thy thoughts then be of peace, thou breaker of the shields? Spirit of fallen Crugal! why didst thou threaten us with death! The narrow house shall receive me in the midst of the light of renown. Exalt, ye sons of Inisfail, exalt the spear and bend the bow; rush on the foe in darkness, as the spirits of stormy nights."

Then dismal, roaring, fierce, and deep, the gloom of battle rolled along; as mist[c] that is poured on the valley, when storms invade the silent sunshine of heaven. The chief moves before in arms, like an angry ghost before a cloud; when meteors inclose him with fire; and the dark winds are in his hand. Carril, far on the heath, bids the horn of battle sound. He raises the voice of the song, and pours his soul into the minds of heroes.

"Where," said the mouth of the song, "where is

[c] As evening mist
Risen from a river o'er the marish glides,
And gathers ground fast at the lab'rer's heels,
Homeward returning. MILTON.

the fallen Crugal? He lies forgot on earth, and the hall of shells[d] is silent. Sad is the spouse of Crugal, for she is a stranger[e] in the hall of her sorrow. But who is she, that like a sun-beam, flies before the ranks of the foe? It is Degrena[f], lovely fair, the spouse of fallen Crugal. Her hair is on the wind behind. Her eye is red; her voice is shrill. Green, empty is thy Crugal now, his form is in the cave of the hill. He comes to the ear of rest, and raises his feeble voice; like the humming of the mountain-bee, or collected flies of evening. But Degrena falls like a cloud of the morn; the sword of Lochlin is in her side. Cairbar, she is fallen, the rising thought of thy youth. She is fallen, O Cairbar, the thought of thy youthful hours."

Fierce Cairbar heard the mournful sound, and rushed on like ocean's whale; he saw the death of his daughter; and roared in the midst of thousands[g]. His spear met a son of Lochlin, and battle spread from wing to wing. As a hundred winds in Lochlin's groves, as fire in the firs of a hundred hills; so loud, so ruinous, and vast the ranks of men are hewn down. Cuthullin cut off heroes like thistles, and Swaran wasted Erin. Curach fell by his hand, and Cairbar of the bossy shield. Morglan lies in lasting rest; and Ca-olt quivers as he dies. His white breast is stained with his blood; and his yellow hair stretched in the dust of his native land. He often had spread the feast where he fell; and often raised the voice of the harp; when his dogs leapt around for joy, and the youths of the chase prepared the bow.

Still Swaran advanced as a stream that bursts from the desart. The little hills are rolled in its course; and the rocks half-sunk by its side. But Cuthullin stood before him like a hill[h] that catches the clouds of hea-

d The ancient Scots, as well as the present Highlanders, drunk in shells: hence it is that we so often meet, in the old poetry, with the chief of shells, and the hall of shells.

e Crugal had married Degrena but a little time before the battle; consequently she may with propriety be called a stranger in the hall of her sorrow.

f Deo-grena signifies a sun-beam.

g Mediisque in millibus ardet. VIRG.

h Virgil and Milton have made use of a comparison similar to this; I shall lay both before the reader, and let him judge for himself which of these two great poets have best succeeded.

ven. The winds contend on its head of pines; and the hail rattles on its rocks. But, firm in its strength, it stands and shades the silent vale of Cona.

So Cuthullin shaded the sons of Erin, and stood in the midst of thousands. Blood rises like the fount of a rock, from panting heroes around him. But Erin falls on either wing like snow in the day of the sun.

"O sons of Inisfail," said Grumal, "Lochlin conquers on the field. Why strive we as reeds against the wind! Fly to the hill of dark-brown hinds." He fled like the stag of Morven, and his spear is a trembling beam of light behind him. Few fled with Grumal, the chief of the little soul: they fell in the battle of heroes on Lena's echoing heath.

High on his car of many gems, the chief of Erin stood; he slew a mighty son of Lochlin, and spoke in haste to Connal. "O Connal, first of mortal men, thou hast taught this arm of death! Though Erin's sons have fled, shall we not fight the foe? O Carril, son of other times, carry my living friends to that bushy hill. Here, Connal, let us stand like rocks, and save our flying friends."

Connal mounts the car of light. They stretch their shields like the darkened moon, the daughter of the starry skies, when she moves a dun circle through heaven. Sithfadda panted up the hill, and Dusronnal haughty steed. Like waves behind a whale, behind them rushed the foe.

Now on the rising side of Cromla stood Erin's few sad sons; like a grove through which the flame had rushed, hurried on by the winds of the stormy night. Cuthullin stood behind an oak. He rolled his red eye in silence, and heard the wind in his bushy hair; when the scout of ocean came, Moran the son of Fithil. "The ships," he cried, "the ships of the lonely isle!

Like Eryx or like Athos great he shows,
Or father Appenine when white with snows:
His head divine obscure in clouds he hides,
And shakes the sounding forests on his sides. DRYDEN.

On th' other side Satan alarm'd,
Collecting all his might, dilated stood,
Like Teneriffe or Atlas unremov'd:
His stature reach'd the sky. MILTON.

There Fingal comes, the first of men, the breaker of the shields. The waves foam before his black prows. His masts with sails are like groves in clouds."

"Blow," said Cuthullin, "all ye winds that rush over my isle of lovely mist. Come to the death of thousands, O chief of the hills of hinds. Thy sails, my friend, are to me like the clouds of the morning; and thy ships like the light of heaven; and thou thyself like a pillar of fire that giveth light in the night. O Connal, first of men, how pleasant are our friends! But the night is gathering around; where now are the ships of Fingal? Here let us pass the hours of darkness, and wish for the moon of heaven."

The winds came down on the woods. The torrents rushed from the rocks. Rain gathered round the head of Cromla; and the red stars trembled between the flying clouds. Sad, by the side of a stream whose sound was echoed by a tree, sad by the side of a stream the chief of Erin sat. Connal son of Colgar was there, and Carril of other times.

"Unhappy is the hand of Cuthullin," said the son of Semo, "unhappy is the hand of Cuthullin, since he slew his friend. Ferda, thou son of Damman, I loved thee as myself."

"How, Cuthullin, son of Semo, fell the breaker of the shields? Well I remember," said Connal, "the noble son of Damman. Tall and fair he was like the rainbow of the hill."

"Ferda from Albion came, the chief of a hundred hills. In Muri's[i] hall he learned the sword, and won the friendship of Cuthullin. We moved to the chase together; and one was our bed in the heath.

"Deugala was the spouse of Cairbar, chief of the plains of Ullin. She was covered with the light of beauty but her heart was the house of pride. She loved that

[i] Muri, say the Irish bards, was an academy in Ulster for teaching the use of arms. The signification of the word is 'a cluster of people;' which renders the opinion probable. Cuthullin is said to have been the first who introduced into Ireland complete armour of steel. He is famous, among the seanachies, for teaching horsemanship to the Irish, and for being the first who used a chariot in that kingdom: which last circumstance was the occasion of Ossian's being so circumstantial in his description of Cuthullin's car in the first book.

sun-beam of youth, the noble son of Damman." "Cairbar," said the white-armed woman, "give me half of the herd. No more will I remain in your halls. Divide the herd, dark Cairbar."

"Let Cuthullin," said Cairbar, "divide my herd on the hill. His breast is the seat of justice. Depart, thou light of beauty. I went and divided the herd. One snow-white bull remained; I gave that bull to Cairbar. The wrath of Deugala rose.

"Son of Damman," begun the fair, "Cuthullin pains my soul. I must hear of his death, or Lubar's stream shall roll over me. My pale ghost shall wander near thee, and mourn the wound of my pride. Pour out the blood of Cuthullin, or pierce this heaving breast."

"Deugala," said the fair-haired youth, "how shall I slay the son of Semo? He is the friend of my secret thoughts, and shall I lift the sword? She wept three days before him, on the fourth he consented to fight.

"I will fight my friend, Deugala! but may I fall by his sword! Could I wander on the hill and behold the grave of Cuthullin!" We fought on the hills of Muri. Our swords avoid a wound. They slide on the helmets of steel, and sound on the slippery shields. Deugala was near with a smile, and said to the son of Damman: "Thine arm is feeble, thou sun-beam of youth. Thy years are not strong for steel. Yield to the son of Semo. He is like the rock of Malmor."

The tear is in the eye of youth. He, faultering, said to me: "Cuthullin, raise thy bossy shield. Defend thee from the hand of thy friend. My soul is laden with grief: for I must slay the chief of men.

I sighed as the wind in the chink of a rock. I lifted high the edge of my steel. The sun-beam of the battle fell; the first of Cuthullin's friends.

Unhappy is the hand of Cuthullin since the hero fell.

"Mournful is thy tale, son of the car," said Carril of other times. "It sends my soul back to the ages of old, and to the days of other years. Often have I heard of Comal who slew the friend he loved; yet victory

attended his steel; and the battle was consumed in hi presence.

" Comal was a son of Albion; the chief of an hun dred hills. His deer drunk of a thousand streams. A thousand rocks replied to the voice of his dogs. Hi face was the mildness of youth. His hand the death o heroes. One was his love, and fair was she! the daugh ter of mighty Conloch. She appeared like a sun-bean among women. And her hair was like the wing of th raven. Her dogs were taught to the chase. Her bow string sounded on the winds of the forest. Her sou was fixed on Comal. Often met their eyes of love Their course in the chase was one, and happy wer their words in secret. But Gormal loved the maid, th dark chief of the gloomy Ardven. He watched he lone steps in the heath; the foe of unhappy Comal.

One day, tired of the chase, when the mist had con cealed their friends, Comal and the daughter of Con loch met in the cave of Ronan[k]. It was the wonte haunt of Comal. Its sides were hung with his arms A hundred shields of thongs were there; a hundre helms of sounding steel.

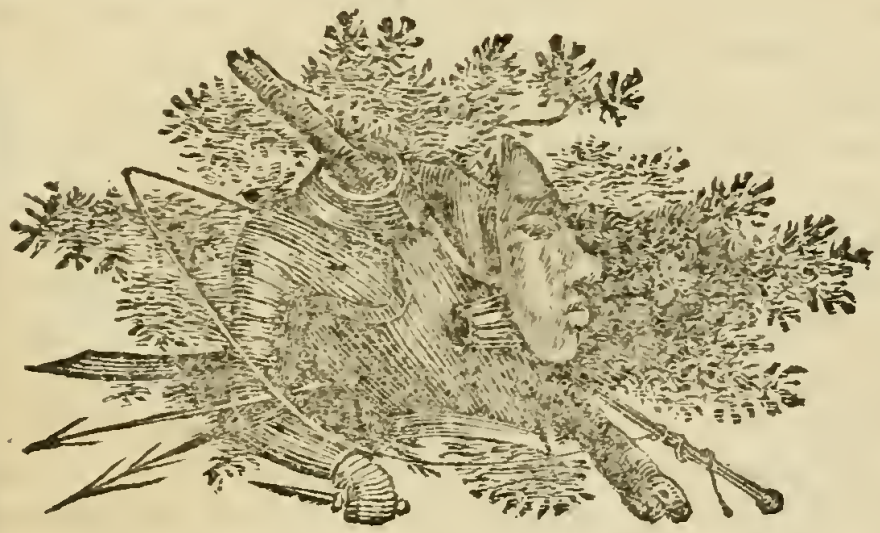
" Rest here," he said, " my love Galvina; thou ligh of the cave of Ronan. A deer appears on Mora's brow I go; but I will soon return." " I fear," she said " dark Grumal my foe; he haunts the cave of Ronan I will rest among the arms; but soon return, my love.

" He went to the deer of Mora. The daughter o Conloch would try his love. She clothed her whit sides with his armour, and strode from the cave c Ronan. He thought it was his foe. His heart bea high. His colour changed, and darkness dimmed hi eye. He drew the bow. The arrow flew. Galvin fell in blood. He run with wildness in his steps, an called the daughter of Conloch. No answer in th

[k] The unfortunate death of this Ronan is the subject of the ninth fragment of Ancient Poetry, published in 1764; it is not the work of Ossian, though it is writ in h manner, and bears the genuine marks of antiquity. The concise expressions of Ossia are imitated, but the thoughts are too jejune and confined to be the production of th poet. Many poems go under his name that have been evidently composed since h time; they are very numerous in Ireland, and some have come to the translator hands. They are trivial and dull to the last degree, swelling into ridiculous bombas or sinking into the lowest kind of prosaic style.

onely rock. "Where art thou, O my love!" He saw at length her heaving heart beating around the feathered dart. "O Conloch's daughter, is it thou!"—He sunk upon her breast.

"The hunters found the hapless pair; he afterwards walked the hill. But many and silent were his steps around the dark dwelling of his love. The fleet of the ocean came. He fought; the strangers fled. He searched for his death over the field. But who could kill the mighty Comal! He threw away his dark-brown shield. An arrow found his manly breast. He sleeps with his loved Galvina at the noise of the sounding surge. Their green tombs are seen by the mariner, when he bounds on the waves of the north."



FINGAL.

The Argument.

Cuthullin, pleased with the story of Carril, insists with that bard for more of his songs. He relates the actions of Fingal in Lochlin, and death of Agandecca the beautiful sister of Swaran. He had scarce finished, when Calmar the son of Matha, who had advised the first battle, came wounded from the field, and told them of Swaran's design to surprise the remains of the Irish army. He himself proposes to withstand singly the whole force of the enemy, in a narrow pass, till the Irish should make good their retreat. Cuthullin, touched with the gallant proposal of Calmar, resolves to accompany him, and orders Carril to carry off the few that remained of the Irish. Morning comes, Calmar dies of his wounds; and the ships of the Caledonians appearing, Swaran gives over the pursuit of the Irish, and returns to oppose Fingal's landing. Cuthullin ashamed, after his defeat, to appear before Fingal, retires to the cave of Tura. Fingal engages the enemy, puts them to flight; but the coming on of night makes the victory not decisive. The king, who had observed the galliant behaviour of his grandson Oscar, gives him advices concerning his conduct in peace and war. He recommends to him to place the example of his fathers before his eyes, as the best model for his conduct; which introduces the episode concerning Fainasollis the daughter of the king of Craca, whom Fingal had taken under his protection, in his youth. Fillan and Oscar are dispatched to observe the motions of the enemy by night. Gaul the son of Morni desires the command of the army in the next battle which Fingal promises to give him. Some general reflections of the poet close the third day.

BOOK III[1].

"PLEASANT are the words of the song," said Cuthullin, "and lovely are the tales of other times. They are like the calm dew of the morning on the hill of roes, when the sun is faint on its side, and the lake is settled and blue in the vale. O Carril, raise again thy voice, and let me hear the song of Tura; which was sung in my halls of joy, when Fingal king of shields was there, and glowed at the deeds of his fathers."

"Fingal! thou man of battle," said Carril, "early were thy deeds in arms. Lochlin was consumed in thy wrath, when thy youth strove with the beauty of maids. They smiled at the fair blooming face of the hero; but death was in his hands. He was strong as the water of Lora. His followers were like the roar of a thousand streams. They took the king of Lochlin in battle, but restored him to his ships. His big heart swelled

1 The second night since the opening of the poem continues, and Cuthullin, Connal and Carril, still sit in the place described in the preceding book. The story of Agandecca is introduced here with propriety, as great use is made of it in the course of the poem and it in some measure brings about the catastrophe.

with pride; and the death of the youth was dark in his soul. For none ever but Fingal overcame the strength of the mighty Starno[m].

He sat in the halls of his shells in Lochlin's woody land. He called the grey-haired Snivan, that often sung round the circle[n] of Loda; when the stone of power heard his cry, and the battle turned in the field of the valiant.

"Go, grey-haired Snivan," Starno said, "go to Arven's sea-surrounded rocks. Tell to Fingal king of the desart, he that is the fairest among his thousands, tell him I give him my daughter, the loveliest maid that ever heaved a breast of snow. Her arms are white as the foam of my waves. Her soul is generous and mild. Let him come with his bravest heroes to the daughter of the secret hall."

Snivan came to Albion's windy hills: and fair-haired Fingal went. His kindled soul flew before him as he bounded on the waves of the north.

"Welcome," said the dark-brown Starno, "welcome king of rocky Morven; and ye his heroes of might; sons of the lonely isle! Three days within my halls shall ye feast; and three days pursue my boars, that your fame may reach the maid that dwells in the secret hall."

"The king of snow[o] design'd their death, and gave the feast of shells. Fingal, who doubted the foe, kept on his arms of steel. The sons of death were afraid, and fled from the eyes of the hero. The voice of sprightly mirth arose. The trembling harps of joy are strung. Bards sing the battle of heroes; or the heaving breast of love. Ullin, Fingal's bard was there; the sweet voice of the hill of Cona. He praised the daughter of snow, and Morven's[p] high-descended chief. The daughter of snow overheard, and left the hall of

m Starno was the father of Swaran as well as Agandecca. His fierce and cruel character is well marked in other poems concerning the times.

n This passage most certainly alludes to the religion of Lochlin, and the 'stone of power' here mentioned, is the image of one of the deities of Scandinavia.

o Starno is here poetically called the king of snow, from the great quantities of snow that fall in his dominions.

p All the north-west coast of Scotland probably went of old under the name of Morven, which signifies a ridge of very high hills.

her secret sigh. She came in all her beauty, like the moon from the cloud of the east. Loveliness was around her as light. Her steps was like the music of songs. She saw the youth and loved him. He was the stolen sigh of her soul. Her blue eyes rolled on him in secret: and she blest the chief of Morven.

" The third day, with all its beams, shone bright on the wood of boars. Forth moved the dark-browed Starno, and Fingal king of shields. Half the day they spent in the chase; and the spear of Fingal was red in the blood of Gormal[q].

" It was then the daughter of Starno, with blue eyes rolling in tears, came with her voice of love, and spoke to the king of Morven.

" Fingal, high-descended chief, trust not Starno's heart of pride. Within that wood he has placed his chiefs; beware of the wood of death. But remember son of the hill, remember Agandecca; save me from the wrath of my father, king of the windy Morven!

" The youth, with unconcern, went on; his heroes by his side. The sons of death fell by his hand; and Gormal echoed around.

" Before the halls of Starno the sons of the chase convened. The king's dark brows were like clouds. His eyes like meteors of night. " Bring hither," he cries, " Agandecca to her lovely king of Morven. His hand is stained with the blood of my people; and her words have not been in vain."

" She came with the red eye of tears. She came with her loose raven locks. Her white breast heaved with sighs, like the foam of the streamy Lubar. Starno pierced her side with steel. She fell like a wreath of snow that slides from the rocks of Ronan, when the woods are still, and the echo deepens in the vale.

" Then Fingal eyed his valiant chiefs; his valiant chiefs took arms. The gloom of the battle roared, and Lochlin fled or died. Pale, in his bounding ship he closed the maid of the raven hair. Her tomb ascends

q Gormal is the name of a hill in Lochlin, in the neighbourhood of Starno's palace.

on Ardven, and the sea roars round the dark dwelling of Agandecca."

"Blessed be her soul," said Cuthullin, "and blessed be the mouth of the song. Strong was the youth of Fingal, and strong is his arm of age. Lochlin shall fall again before the king of echoing Morven. Show thy face from a cloud, O moon; light his white sails on the wave of the night. And if any strong spirit[r] of heaven sit on that low-hung cloud, turn his dark ships from the rock, thou rider of the storm!"

Such were the words of Cuthullin at the sound of the mountain-stream, when Calmar ascended the hill, the wounded son of Matha. From the field he came in his blood. He leaned on his bending spear. Feeble is the arm of battle! but strong the soul of the hero!

"Welcome! O son of Matha," said Connal, welcome art thou to thy friends! Why bursts that broken sigh from the breast of him that never feared before?"

"And never Connal, will he fear, chief of the pointed steel. My soul brightens in danger, and exults in the noise of battle. I am of the race of steel; my fathers never feared.

"Cormar was the first of my race. He sported through the storms of the waves. His black skiff bounded on ocean; and travelled on the wings of the blast. A spirit once embroiled the night. Seas swell and rocks resound. Winds drive along the clouds. The lightning flies on wings of fire. He feared, and came to land; then blushed that he feared at all. He rushed again among the waves to find the son of the wind. Three youths guide the bounding bark; he stood with the sword unsheathed. When the low hung vapour passed, he took it by the curling head, and searched its dark womb with his steel. The son of the wind forsook the air. The moon and stars returned.

"Such was the boldness of my race; and Calmar is like his fathers. Danger flies from the uplifted sword. They best succeed who dare."

r This is the only passage in the poem that has the appearance of religion. But Cuthullin's apostrophe to this spirit is accompanied with a doubt, so that it is not easy to determine whether the hero meant a superior being, or the ghosts of deceased warriors, who were supposed in those times to rule the storms, and to transport themselves in a gust of wind from one country to another.

"But now, ye sons of green-valley'd Erin, retire from Lena's bloody heath. Collect the sad remnant of our friends, and join the sword of Fingal. I heard the sound of Lochlin's advancing arms; but Calmar will remain and fight. My voice shall be such, my friends, as if thousands were behind me. But, son of Semo, remember me. Remember Calmar's lifeless corse. After Fingal has wasted the field, place me by some stone of remembrance, that future times may hear my fame; and the mother[r] of Calmar rejoice over the stone of my renown."

"No: son of Matha," said Cuthullin, "I will never leave thee. My joy is in the unequal field: my soul increases in danger. Connal, and Carril of other times, carry off the sad sons of Erin; and when the battle is over, search for our pale corses in this narrow way. For near this oak we shall stand in the stream of the battle of thousands. O Fithil's son, with feet of wind, fly over the heath of Lena. Tell to Fingal that Erin is inthralled, and bid the king of Morven hasten. O let him come like the sun in a storm, when he shines on the hills of grass."

Morning is grey on Cromla; the sons of the sea ascend. Calmar stood forth to meet them in the pride of his kindling soul. But pale was the face of the warrior; he leaned on his father's spear; that spear which he brought from Lara's hall, when the soul of his mother was sad. But slowly now the hero falls, like a tree on the plains of Cona. Dark Cuthullin stands alone like a rock in a sandy vale. The sea comes with its waves, and roars on its hardened sides. Its head is covered with foam, and the hills are echoing around. Now from the grey mist of the ocean, the white-sailed ships of Fingal appear. High is the groves of their masts, as they nod, by turns, on the rolling wave.

[r] Alcletha, her lamentation over her son is introduced in the poem concerning the death of Cuthullin printed in this collection.

[t] So some tall rock o'erhangs the hoary main,
By winds assail'd, by billows beat in vain,
Unmov'd it hears, above, the tempests blow,
And sees the wat'ry mountains break below. POPE.

Swaran saw them from the hill, and returned from the sons of Erin. As ebbs the resounding sea through the hundred isles of Inistore; so loud, so vast, so immense returned the sons of Lochlin against the king of the desart hill. But bending, weeping, sad, and slow, and dragging his long spear behind, Cuthullin sunk in Cromla's wood, and mourned his fallen friends. He feared the face of Fingal, who was wont to greet him from the fields of renown.

" How many lie there of my heroes! the chiefs of Inisfail! they that were cheerful in the hall, when the sound of the shells arose: no more shall I find their steps in the heath, or hear their voice in the chase of the hinds. Pale, silent, low on bloody beds are they who were my friends! O spirits of the lately dead, meet Cuthullin on his heath. Converse with him on the wind, when the rustling tree of Tura's cave resounds. There, far remote, I shall lie unknown. No bard shall hear of me. No grey stone shall rise to my renown. Mourn with me the dead, O Bragela! departed is my fame."

Such were the words of Cuthullin, when he sunk in the woods of Cromla.

Fingal, tall in his ship, stretched his bright lance before him. Terrible was the gleam of his steel: it was like the green meteor of death, setting in the heath of Malmor, when the traveller is alone, and the broad moon is darkened in heaven.

" The battle is over," said the king, " and I behold the blood of my friends. Sad is the heath of Lena! and the mournful oaks of Cromla! The hunters have fallen there in their strength! and the son of Semo is no more. Ryno and Fillan, my sons, sound the horn of Fingal's war. Ascend that hill on the shore, and call the children of the foe. Call them from the grave of Lamdarg, the chief of other times. Be your voice like that of your father, when he enters the battles of his strength. I wait for the dark mighty man: I wait on Lena's shore for Swaran. And let him come

with all his race; for strong in battle are the friends of the dead."

Fair Ryno flew like lightning; dark Fillan as the shade of autumn. On Lena's heath their voice is heard: the sons of ocean heard the horn of Fingal's war as the roaring eddy of ocean returning from the kingdom of snows; so strong, so dark, so sudden came down the sons of Lochlin. The king in their front appears in the dismal pride of his arms. Wrath burns in his dark-brown face: and his eyes roll in the fire of his valour.

Fingal beheld the son of Starno; and he remembered Agandecca. For Swaran with the tears of youth had mourned his white-bosomed sister. He sent Ullin of the songs to bid him to the feast of shells. For pleasant on Fingal's soul returned the remembrance of the first of his loves.

Ullin came with aged steps, and spoke to Starno's son. "O thou that dwellest afar, surrounded like a rock with thy waves, come to the feast of the king, and pass the day in rest. To-morrow let us fight, O Swaran, and break the echoing shields."

"To-day," said Starno's wrathful son, "we break the echoing shields: to morrow my feasts will be spread; and Fingal lie on earth."

"And to-morrow let his feast be spread," said Fingal with a smile; "for, to-day, O my sons, we shall break the echoing shields. Ossian, stand thou near my arm. Gaul, lift thy terrible sword. Fergus, bend thy crooked yew. Throw, Fillan, thy lance through heaven.—Lift your shields like the darkened moon. Be your spears the meteors of death. Follow me in the path of my fame; and equal my deeds in battle."

As a hundred winds on Morven; as the streams of a hundred hills; as clouds fly successive over heaven; or, as the dark ocean assaults the shore of the desart: so roaring, so vast, so terrible the armies mixed on Lena's echoing heath. The groan of the people spread over the hills; it was like the thunder of night, when the

cloud bursts on Cona, and a thousand ghosts shriek at once on the hollow wind.

Fingal rushed on in his strength, terrible as the spirit of Trenmor; when, in a whirlwind, he comes to Morven to see the children of his pride. The oaks resound on their hills, and the rocks fall down before him. Bloody was the hand of my father when he whirled the lightning of his sword. He remembers the battles of his youth, and the field is wasted in his course.

Ryno went on like a pillar of fire. Dark is the brow of Gaul. Fergus rushed forward with feet of wind; and Fillan like the mist of the hill. Myself, [u] like a rock, came down, I exulted in the strength of the king. Many were the deaths of my arm; and dismal was the gleam of my sword. My locks were not then so grey; nor trembled my hands of age. My eyes were not closed in darkness; nor failed my feet in the race.

Who can relate the deaths of the people; or the deeds of mighty heroes; when Fingal, burning in his wrath, consumed the sons of Lochlin? Groans swelled on groans, from hill to hill, till night had covered all. Pale, staring like a herd of deer, the sons of Lochlin convene on Lena.

We sat and heard the sprightly harp, at Lubar's gentle stream. Fingal himself was next to the foe; and listened to the tales of bards. His godlike race were in the song, the chiefs of other times. Attentive, leaning on his shield the king of Morven sat. The wind whistled through his aged locks, and his thoughts are of the days of other years. Near him, on his bending spear, my young, my lovely Oscar stood. He admired the king of Morven: and his actions were swelling in his soul.

"Son of my son," began the king, "O Oscar, pride of youth, I saw the shining of thy sword and gloried in my race. Pursue the glory of our fathers, and be what they have been; when Trenmor lived, the first of men, and Trathal, the father of heroes. They fought

[u] Here the poet celebrates his own actions, but he does it in such a manner that we are not displeased. The mention of the great actions of his youth immediately suggests to him the helpless situation of his age. We do not despise him for selfish praise, but feel his misfortunes.

the battle in their youths and are the song of bards. O Oscar! bend the strong in arms: but spare the feeble hand. Be thou a stream of many tides against the foes of thy people; but like the gale that moves the grass to those who ask thine aid. So Trenmor lived; such Trathal was; and such has Fingal been. My arm was the support of the injured; and the weak rested behind the lightning of my steel.

Oscar! I was young like thee, when lovely Fainasollis came: that sun-beam! that mild light of love! the daughter of Craca's [v] king! I then returned from Cona's heath, and few were in my train. A white-sailed boat appeared far off; we saw it like a mist that rode on ocean's blast. It soon approached; we saw the fair. Her white breast heaved with sighs. The wind was in her loose dark hair; her rosy cheek had tears. "Daughter of beauty," calm I said, "what sigh is in that breast? can I, young as I am, defend thee, daughter of the sea? My sword is not unmatched in war, but dauntless is my heart."

"To thee I fly," with sighs she replied, "O chief of mighty men! To thee I fly, chief of shells, supporter of the feeble hand! The king of Craca's echoing isle owned me the sun-beam of his race. And often did the hills of Cromla reply to the sighs of love for the unhappy Fainasollis. Sora's chief beheld me fair; and loved the daughter of Craca. His sword is like a beam of light upon the warrior's side. But dark is his brow; and tempests are in his soul. I shun him on the rolling sea: but Sora's chief pursues."

"Rest thou," I said, "behind my shield; rest in peace, thou beam of light! The gloomy chief of Sora will fly, if Fingal's arm is like his soul. In some lone cave I might conceal thee, daughter of the sea! But Fingal never flies; for where the danger threatens, I rejoice in the storm of spears." I saw the tears upon her cheek. I pitied Craca's fair.

[v] What the Craca here mentioned was, is not, at this distance of time, easy to determine. The most probable opinion is, that it was one of the Shetland isles. There is a story concerning a daughter of the king of Craca in the sixth book.

Now, like a dreadful wave afar, appeared the ship of stormy Borbar. His masts high-bended over the sea behind their sheets of snow. White roll the waters on either side. The strength of ocean sounds. "Come thou," I said, "from the roar of ocean, thou rider of the storm. Partake the feast within my hall. It is the house of strangers." The maid stood trembling by my side; he drew the bow: she fell. "Unerring is thy hand," I said, "but feeble was the foe." We fought, nor weak was the strife of death: he sunk beneath my sword. We laid them in two tombs of stones; the unhappy children of youth.

Such have I been in my youth, O Oscar; be thou like the age of Fingal. Never seek the battle, nor shun it when it comes. "Fillan and Oscar of the dark brown hair, ye children of the race, fly over the heath of roaring winds; and view the sons of Lochlin. Far off I hear the noise of their feet, like the storms of echoing Cona. Go; that they may not fly my sword along the waves of the north. For many chiefs of Erin's race lie here on the dark bed of death. The children of the storm are low; the sons of echoing Cromla."

The heroes flew like two dark clouds; two dark clouds that are the chariots of ghosts; when air's dark children come to frighten hapless men.

It was then that Gaul [w], the son of Morni, stood like a rock in the night. His spear is glittering to the stars; his voice like many streams. "Son of battle," cried the chief, "O Fingal, king of shells! let the bards of many songs soothe Erin's friends to rest. And, Fingal, sheath thy sword of death; and let thy people fight. We wither away without our fame; for our king is the only breaker of shields. When morning rises on our hills, behold at a distance our deeds. Let Lochlin feel the sword of Morni's son, that bards may sing of me.

[w] Gaul, the son of Morni, was a chief of a tribe that disputed long the pre-eminence with Fingal himself. They were reduced at last to obedience, and Gaul, from an enemy, turned Fingal's best friend, and greatest hero. His character is something like that of Ajax in the Iliad; a hero of more strength than conduct in battle. He was very fond of military fame, and here he demands the next battle to himself. The poet, by an artifice, removes Fingal, that his return may be the more magnificent.

Such was the custom heretofore of Fingal's noble race. Such was thine own, thou king of swords, in battles of the spear."

"O son of Morni," Fingal replied, "I glory in thy fame. Fight; but my spear shall be near to aid thee in the midst of danger. Raise, raise the voice, sons of the song, and lull me into rest. Here will Fingal lie amidst the wind of night. And if thou, Agandecca, art near, among the children of thy land; if thou sittest on a blast of wind among the high-shrouded masts of Lochlin; come to my dreams *, my fair one, and show thy bright face to my soul."

Many a voice and many a harp in tuneful sounds arose. Of Fingal's noble deeds they sung, and of the noble race of the hero. And sometimes on the lovely sound was heard the name of the now mournful Ossian.

Often have I fought, and often won in the battles of the spear. But blind, and tearful, and forlorn, I now walk with little men. O Fingal, with thy race of battle I now behold thee not! The wild roes feed upon the green tomb of the mighty king of Morven! Blest be thy soul, thou king of swords, thou most renowned on the hills of Cona.

* The poet prepares us for the dream of Fingal in the next book.

FINGAL.

The Argument.

The action of the poem being suspended by night, Ossian takes that opportunity to relate his own actions at the lake of Lego, and his courtship of Everallin, who was the mother of Oscar, and had died some time before the expedition of Fingal into Ireland. Her ghost appears to him, and tells him that Oscar, who had been sent in the beginning of the night to observe the enemy, was engaged with an advanced party and almost overpowered. Ossian relieves his son; and an alarm is given to Fingal of the approach of Swaran. The king rises, calls his army together, and, as he had promised the preceding night, devolves the command on Gaul the son of Morni, while he himself, after charging his sons to behave gallantly and defend his people, retires to a hill, from whence he could have a view of the battle. The battle joins; the poet relates Oscar's great actions. But when Oscar, in conjunction with his father, conquered in one wing, Gaul, who was attacked by Swaran in person, was on the point of retreating on the other. Fingal sends Ullin his bard to encourage him with a war-song, but notwithstanding, Swaran prevails; and Gaul and his army are obliged to give way. Fingal, descending from the hill, rallies them again: Swaran desists from the pursuit, possesses himself of a rising ground, restores the ranks, and waits the approach of Fingal. The king, having encouraged his men, gives the necessary orders, and renews the battle. Cuthullin, who with his friend Connal, and Carril his bard, had retired to the cave of Tura, hearing the noise, came to the brow of the hill, which overlooked the field of battle, where he saw Fingal engaged with the enemy. He, being hindered by Connal from joining Fingal, who was himself upon the point of obtaining a complete victory, sends Carril to congratulate that hero on his success.

BOOK IV. *

Who comes with her songs from the mountain, like the bow of the showery Lena? It is the maid of the voice of love. The white-armed daughter of Toscar. Often hast thou heard my song, often given the tear of beauty. Dost thou come to the battles of thy people? and to hear the actions of Oscar? When shall I cease to mourn by the streams of the echoing Cona? My years have passed away in battle, and my age is darkened with sorrow.

Daughter of the hand of snow! I was not so mournful and blind, I was not so dark and forlorn, when Everallin loved me! Everallin with the dark-brown hair, the white-bosomed love of Cormac. A thousand heroes sought the maid, she denied her love to a thou-

* Fingal being asleep, and the action being suspended by night, the poet introduces the story of his courtship of Everallin the daughter of Branno. The episode is necessary to clear up several passages that follow in the poem; at the same time that it naturally brings on the action of the book, which may be supposed to begin about the middle of the third night from the opening of the poem. This book, as many of Ossian's other compositions, is addressed to the beautiful Malvina the daughter of Toscar. She appears to have been in love with Oscar, and to have affected the company of the father after the death of the son.

sand; the sons of the sword were despised; for graceful in her eyes was Ossian.

I went, in suit of the maid, to Lego's sable surge: twelve of my people were there, the sons of the streamy Morven. We came to Branno, friend of strangers; Branno of the sounding mail. "From whence," he said, "are the arms of steel? Not easy to win is the maid that has denied the blue-eyed sons of Erin. But blest be thou, O son of Fingal. Happy is the maid that waits thee. Though twelve daughters of beauty were mine, thine were the choice, thou son of fame!" Then he opened the hall of the maid, the dark-haired Everallin. Joy kindled in our breasts of steel; we blest the maid of Branno.

Above us on the hall appeared the people of stately Cormac. Light were the heroes of the chief; and the heath flamed with their arms. There Colla, Durra o the wounds, there mighty Toscar, and Tago, there Frestal the victorious stood; Dairo of the happy deeds and Dala the battle's bulwark in the narrow way. The sword flamed in the hand of Cormac, and graceful wa the look of the hero.

Eight were the heroes of Ossian; Ullin, stormy son of war; Mullo of the generous deeds; the noble, the graceful Scelacha; Oglan, and Cerdal the wrathful, and Dumarican's brows of death. And why should Oga be the last; so wide renowned on the hills of Ardven?

Ogar met Dala the strong, face to face on the field of heroes. The battle of the chiefs was like the wind on ocean's foamy waves. The dagger is remembered by Ogar; the weapon which he loved; nine times he drowned it in Dala's side. The stormy battle turned. Three times I pierced Cormac's shield: three times he broke his spear. But, unhappy youth of love! I cut his head away. Five times I shook it by the lock. The friends of Cormac fled.

Whoever would have told me, lovely maid ≈, when then I strove in battle, that blind, forsaken, and for

≈ The poet addresses himself to Malvina the daughter of Toscar.

lorn I now should pass the night; firm ought his mail to have been, and unmatched his arm in battle.

Now[a] on Lena's gloomy heath the voice of music died away. The unconstant blast blew hard, and the high oak shook its leaves around me; of Everallin were my thoughts, when she, in all the light of beauty, and her blue eyes rolling in tears, stood on a cloud before my sight, and spoke with feeble voice.

"O Ossian, rise and save my son; save Oscar chief of men. Near the red oak of Lubar's stream, he fights with Lochlin's sons." She sunk into her cloud again. I clothed me with my steel. My spear supported my steps, and my rattling armour rung. I hummed, as I was wont in danger, the songs of heroes of old. Like distant thunder[b] Lochlin heard; they fled; my son pursued.

I called him like a distant stream. "My son, return over Lena. No further pursue the foe," I said, "though Ossian is behind thee." He came; and lovely in my ear was Oscar's sounding steel. "Why didst thou stop my hand," he said, "till death had covered all? For dark and dreadful by the stream they met thy son and Fillan. They watched the terrors of the night. Our swords have conquered some. But as the winds of night pour the ocean over the white sands of Mora, so dark advance the sons of Lochlin over Lena's rustling heath. The ghosts of night shriek afar, and I have seen the meteors of death. Let me awake the king of Morven, he that smiles in danger; for he is like the sun of heaven that rises in a storm."

Fingal had started from a dream, and leaned on Trenmor's shield; the dark-brown shield of his fathers, which they had lifted of old in the battles of their race.

a The poet returns to his subject. If one could fix the time of the year in which the action of the poem happened, from the scene described here, I should be tempted to place it in autumn. The trees shed their leaves, and the winds are variable, both which circumstances agree with that season of the year.

b Ossian gives the reader a high idea of himself. His very song frightens the enemy. This passage resembles one in the eighteenth Iliad, where the voice of Achilles frightens the Trojans from the body of Patroclus.

> Forth march'd the chief, and distant from the crowd
> High on the rampart rais'd his voice aloud.
> So high his brazen voice the hero rear'd,
> Hosts drop their arms and trembl'd as they fear'd. POPE.

The hero had seen in his rest the mournful form of Agandecca; she came from the way of the ocean, and slowly, lonely, moved over Lena. Her face was pale like the mist of Cromla; and dark were the tears of her cheek. She often raised her dim hand from her robe; her robe which was of the clouds of the desart; she raised her dim hand over Fingal, and turned away her silent eyes.

"Why weeps the daughter of Starno?" said Fingal, with a sigh. "Why is thy face so pale, thou daughter of the clouds?" She departed on the wind of Lena; and left him in the midst of the night. She mourned the sons of her people that were to fall by Fingal's hand.

The hero started from rest, and still beheld her in his soul. The sound of Oscar's steps approached. The king saw the grey shield on his side. For the faint beam of the morning came over the waters of Ullin.

"What do the foes in their fear!" said the rising king of Morven. "Or fly they through ocean's foam, or wait they the battle of steel! But why should Fingal ask? I hear their voice on the early wind. Fly over Lena's heath, O Oscar, and awake our friends to battle."

The king stood by the stone of Lubar; and thrice raised his terrible voice. The deer started from the mountains of Cromla: and all the rocks shook on their hills. Like the noise of a hundred mountain-streams that burst and roar, and foam; like the clouds that gather to a tempest on the blue face of the sky; so met the sons of the desart, round the terrible voice of Fingal. For pleasant was the voice of the king of Morven to the warriors of the land; often had he led them to battle, and returned with the spoils of the foe.

"Come to battle, said the king, "ye children of the storm. Come to the death of thousands. Comhal's son shall see the fight. My sword shall wave on that hill, and be the shield of my people. But never may you need it, warriors, while the son of Morni fights

the chief of mighty men. He shall lead my battle; that his fame may rise in the song. O ye ghosts of heroes dead! ye riders of the storm of Cromla! receive my falling people with joy, and bring them to your hills. And may the blast of Lena carry them over my seas, that they may come to my silent dreams, and delight my soul in rest.

"Fillan and Oscar of the dark-brown hair, fair Ryno, with the pointed steel! advance with valour to the fight; and behold the son of Morni. Let your swords be like his in the strife; and behold the deeds of his hands. Protect the friends of your father: and remember the chiefs of old. My children, I shall see you yet though here ye should fall in Erin. Soon shall our cold, pale ghosts meet in a cloud, and fly over the hills of Cona."

Now like a dark and stormy cloud, edged round with the red lightning of heaven, and flying westward from the morning's beam, the king of hills removed. Terrible is the light of his armour, and two spears are in his hand. His grey hair falls on the wind. He often looks back on the war. Three bards attend the son of fame, to carry his words to the heroes. High on Cromla's side he sat, waving the lightning of his sword, and as he waved we moved.

Joy rose in Oscar's face. His cheek is red. His eye sheds tears. The sword is a beam of fire in his hand. He came, and smiling, spoke to Ossian. "O ruler of the fight of steel! my father, hear thy son. Retire with Morven's mighty chief; and give me Ossian's fame. And if here I fall, my king, remember that breast of snow, that lonely sun-beam of my love, the white handed daughter of Toscar. For, with red cheek from the rock, and bending over the stream, her soft hair flies about her bosom, as she pours the sigh for Oscar. Tell her I am on my hills a lightly bounding son of the wind; that hereafter in a cloud, I may meet the lovely maid of Toscar."

"Raise, Oscar, rather raise my tomb. I will not yield the fight to thee. For first and bloodiest in the war my arm shall teach thee how to fight. But, re-

member, my son, to place this sword, this bow, and the horn of my deer, within that dark and narrow house, whose mark is one grey stone. Oscar I have no love to leave to the care of my son; for graceful Everallin is no more, the lovely daughter of Branno."

Such were our words, when Gaul's loud voice came growing on the wind. He waved on high the sword of his father, and rushed to death and wounds.

As waves white bubbling over the deep come swelling, roaring on, as rocks of ooze meet roaring waves: so foes attacked and fought. Man met with man, and steel with steel. Shields sound; men fall. As a hundred hammers on the son of the furnace, so rose, so rung their swords.

Gaul rushed on like a whirlwind in Ardven. The destruction of heroes is on his sword. Swaran was like the fire of the desart on the echoing heath of Gormal. How can I give to the song the death of many spears? My sword rose high, and flamed in the strife of blood. And Oscar, terrible wert thou, my best, my greatest son! I rejoiced in my secret soul, when his sword flamed over the slain. They fled amain through Lena's heath: and we pursued and slew. As stones that bound from rock to rock; as axes in echoing woods; as thunder rolls from hill to hill in dismal broken peals; so blow succeeded to blow, and death to death, from the hand of Oscar [c] and mine.

But Swaran closed round Morni's son, as the strength of the tide of Inistore. The king half rose from his hill at the sight, and half assumed the spear. "Go, Ullin, go, my aged bard," begun the king of Morven. "Remind the mighty Gaul of battle; remind him of his fathers. Support the yielding fight with song; for song enlivens war." Tall Ullin went, with steps of age, and spoke to the king of swords.

c Ossian never fails to give a fine character to his beloved son. His speech to his father is that of a hero; it contains the submission due to a parent, and the warmth that becomes a young warrior. There is a propriety in dwelling here on the actions of Oscar, as the beautiful Malvina, to whom the book is addressed, was in love with the hero.

" Son [d] of the chief of generous steeds! high-bounding king of spears. Strong arm in every perilous toil. Hard heart that never yields. Chief of the pointed arms of death. Cut down the foe; let no white sail bound round dark Inistore. Be thine arm like thunder, thine eyes like fire, thy heart of solid rock. Whirl round thy sword as a meteor at night, and lift thy shield like the flame of death. Son of the chief of generous steeds, cut down the foe. Destroy." The hero's heart beat high. But Swaran came with battle. He cleft the shield of Gaul in twain; and the sons of the desart fled.

Now Fingal arose in his might, and thrice he reared his voice. Cromla answered around, and the sons of the desart stood still. They bent their red faces to earth, ashamed at the presence of Fingal. He came like a cloud of rain in the days of the sun, when slow it rolls on the hill, and fields expect the shower. Swaran beheld the terrible king of Morven, and stopped in the midst of his course. Dark he leaned on his spear, rolling his red eyes around. Silent and tall he seemed, as an oak on the banks of Lubar which had its branches blasted of old by the lightning of heaven. It bends over the stream, and the grey moss whistles in the wind: so stood the king. Then slowly he retired to the rising heath of Lena. His thousands pour around the hero, and the darkness of battle gathers on the hill.

Fingal, like a beam from heaven, shone in the midst of his people. His heroes gather around him, and he sends forth the voice of his power. " Raise my standards [e] on high. Spread them on Lena's wind like the flames of an hundred hills. Let them sound on the winds of Erin, and remind us of the fight. Ye sons of the roaring streams that pour from a thousand hills, be near the king of Morven: attend to the words of his

[d] The war song of Ullin varies from the rest of the poem in the versification. It runs down like a torrent; and consists almost entirely of epithets. The custom of encouraging men to battle with extempore rhymes, has been carried down almost to our own times. Several of those war-songs are extant, but the most of them are only a group of epithets, without beauty or harmony, utterly destitute of poetical merit.

[e] Th' imperial ensign, which full high advanc'd,
Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind. MILTON.

power. Gaul, strongest arm of death! O Oscar, of the future fights! Connal, son of the blue steel of Sora! Dermid of the dark-brown hair! and Ossian, king of many songs, be near your father's arm!"

We reared the sun-beam [e] of battle, the standard of the king. Each hero's soul exulted with joy, as waving it flew on the wind. It was studded with gold above, as the blue wide shell of the nightly sky. Each hero had his standard too; and each his gloomy men.

"Behold," said the king of generous shells, "how Lochlin divides on Lena. They stand like broken clouds on the hill, or an half consumed grove of oaks; when we see the sky through its branches, and the meteor passing behind. Let every chief among the friends of Fingal take a dark troop of those that frown so high; nor let a son of the echoing groves bound on the waves of Inistore."

"Mine," said Gaul, "be the seven chiefs that came from Lano's lake." "Let Inistore's dark king," said Oscar, "come to the sword of Ossian's son." "To mine the king of Iniscon," said Connal, "heart of steel!" "Or Mudan's chief or I," said brown-haired Dermid, "shall sleep on clay-cold earth." My choice, though now so weak and dark, was Terman's battling king; I promised with my hand to win the hero's dark-brown shield. "Blest and victorious be my chiefs," said Fingal of the mildest look; "Swaran, king of roaring waves, thou art the choice of Fingal."

Now, like an hundred different winds that pour thro' many vales; divided, dark, the sons of the hill advanced, and Cromla echoed around.

How can I relate the deaths when we closed in the strife of our steel? O daughter of Toscar! bloody were our hands! The gloomy ranks of Lochlin fell like the banks of the roaring Cona. Our arms were victorious on Lena; each chief fulfilled his promise. Beside the murmur of Branno thou didst often sit, O maid; when

[e] Fingal's standard was distinguished by the name of sun-beam; probably on account of its bright colour, and its being studded with gold. To begin a battle, is expressed, in old composition, by lifting of the sun-beam.

thy white bosom rose frequent, like the down of the swan when slow she sails the lake, and sidelong winds are blowing. Thou hast seen the sun *f* retire red and slow behind his cloud; night gathering round on the mountain, while the unfrequent blast *g* roared in narrow vales. At length the rain beats hard: and thunder rolls in pales. Lightning glances on the rocks. Spirits ride on beams of fire. And the strength of the mountain-streams *h* come roaring down the hills. Such was the noise of battle, maid of the arms of snow. Why, daughter of the hill, that tear? the maids of Lochlin have cause to weep. The people of their country fell, for bloody was the blue steel of the race of my heroes. But I am sad, forlorn, and blind; and no more the companion of heroes. Give, lovely maid, to me thy tears, for I have seen the tombs of all my friends.

It was then by Fingal's hand a hero fell, to his grief. Grey-haired he rolled in the dust, and lifted his faint eyes to the king. "And is it by me thou hast fallen," said the son of Comhal, "thou friend of Agandecca! I saw thy tears for the maid of my love in the halls of the bloody Starno. Thou hast been the foe of the foes of my love, and hast thou fallen by my hand? Raise, Ullin, raise the grave of the son of Mathon, and give his name to the song of Agandecca; for dear to my soul hast thou been, thou darkly-dwelling maid of Ardven."

Cuthullin, from the cave of Cromla, heard the noise of the troubled war. He called to Connal chief of swords, and Carril of other times. The grey-haired heroes heard his voice, and took their aspen spears. They came, and saw the tide of battle, like the crowded waves of the ocean; when the dark wind blows

f Above the rest the sun, who never lies,
Foretells the change of weather in the skies.
For if he rise, unwilling to his race,
Clouds on his brow, and spots upon his face,
Or if thro' mists he shoots his sullen beams,
Pregnant of light, in loose and straggling streams,
Suspect a drizzling day. DRYDEN.

g For e're the rising winds begin to roar,
The working seas advance to wash the shore;
Soft whispers run along the leafy wood,
And mountains whistle to the murmuring flood. DRYDEN.

h The rapid rains, descending from the hills,
The swelling torrents swell the creeping rills. DRYDEN.

from the deep, and rolls the billows through the sandy vale.

Cuthullin kindled at the sight, and darkness gathered on his brow. His hand is on the sword of his fathers: his red-rolling eyes on the foe. He thrice attempted to rush to battle, and thrice did Connal stop him. "Chief of the isle of mist," he said, "Fingal subdues the foe. Seek not a part of the fame of the king; himself is like the storm."

"Then, Carril, go," replied the chief, "and greet the king of Morven. When Lochlin falls away like a stream after rain, and the noise of the battle is over then be thy voice sweet in his ear to praise the king of swords. Give him the sword of Caithbat; for Cuthullin is worthy no more to lift the arms of his fathers.

"But, O ye ghosts of the lonely Cromla! ye souls of chiefs that are no more! be ye the companions of Cuthullin, and talk to him in the grave of his sorrow. For never more shall I be renowned among the mighty in the land. I am like a beam that has shone; like a mist that fled away when the blast of the morning came, and brightened the shaggy side of the hill. Connal, talk of arms no more: departed is my fame. My sighs shall be on Cromla's wind till my footsteps cease to be seen. And thou, white-bosom'd Bragela, mourn over the fall of my fame; for, vanquished, I will never return to thee, thou sun-beam of Dunscaich."

FINGAL.

The Argument.

Cuthullin and Connal still remain on the hill. Fingal and Swaran meet; the combat is described. Swaran is overcome, bound, and delivered over a prisoner to the care of Ossian, and Gaul the son of Morni; Fingal, his younger sons, and Oscar, still pursue the enemy. The episode of Orla, a chief of Lochlin, who was mortally wounded in the battle, is introduced. Fingal, touched with the death of Orla, orders the pursuit to be discontinued; and called his sons together; he is informed that Ryno, the youngest of them, was killed. He laments his death, hears the story of Lamderg; and Gelchossa, and returns towards the place where he had left Swaran. Carril, who had been sent by Cuthullin to congratulate Fingal on his victory, comes in the mean time to Ossian. The conversation of the two poets closes the action of the fourth day.

BOOK V[1].

Now Connal on Cromla's windy side spoke to the chief of the noble car. "Why that gloom, son of Semo? Our friends are the mighty in battle. And renowned art thou, O warrior! many were the deaths of thy steel. Often has Bragela met with blue-rolling eyes of joy, often has she met her hero, returning in the midst of the valiant; when his sword was red with slaughter, and his foes silent in the fields of the tomb. Pleasant to her ears were thy bards, when thine actions rose in the song.

"But behold the king of Morven! He moves below like a pillar of fire. His strength is like the stream of Lubar, or the wind of the echoing Cromla, when the branches of night are overturned.

"Happy are thy people, O Fingal; thine arm shall fight their battles! thou art the first in their dangers; the wisest in the days of their peace. Thou speakest and thy thousands obey; and armies tremble at the

[1] The fourth day still continues. The poet by putting the narration in the mouth of Connal, makes [illegible] with Cuthullin on the side of Cromla, gives propriety to the [illegible] of that hero. The beginning of this book, in the original, is one of the most beautiful parts of the poem. The versification is regular and full, and agrees very well with the sedate character of Connal. The poet has adapted the cadence of his verse more to the manner of the speaker than Ossian has done. It is more than probable, that the whole poem was composed to be sung on the harp, as the versification is [illegible] to the different passions of the human mind.

sound of thy steel. Happy are thy people, Fingal, chief of the lonely hills.

" Who is it that so dark and terrible, coming in the thunder of his course? who is it but Starno's son to meet the king of Morven! Behold the battle of the chiefs: it is like the storm of the ocean, when two spirits meet far distant and contend for the rolling of the wave. The hunter hears the noise on his hill; and sees the high billows advancing to Ardven's shore."

Such were the words of Connal, when the heroes met in the midst of their falling people. There was the clang of arms! there every blow, like the hundred hammers of the furnace! Terrible is the battle of the kings, and horrid the look of their eyes. Their dark-brown shields are cleft in twain; and their steel flies, broken, from their helmets. They fling their weapons down. Each rushes * to the grasp of his foe. Their sinewy arms bend round each other: they turn from side to side, and strain and stretch their large spreading limbs below. But when the pride of their strength arose, they shook the hill with their heels; rocks tumble from their places on high; the green-headed bushes are overturned. At length the strength of Swaran fell; and the king of groves is bound.

Thus have I seen on Cona; (but Cona I behold no more,) thus have I seen two dark hills removed from their place by the strength of the bursting stream. They turn from side to side, and their tall oaks meet one another on high. Then they fall together with all their rocks and trees. The streams are turned by their sides, and the red ruin is seen afar.

" Sons of the king of Morven," said the noble Fingal, " guard the king of Lochlin; for he is strong as his thousand waves. His hand is taught to the battle and his race of the times of old. Gaul, thou first of my heroes, and Ossian king of songs, attend the friend

* This passage resembles one in the twenty-third Iliad.

Close lock'd above, their heads and arms are mixt;
Below their planted feet at distance next;
Now to the grasp each manly body bends;
The humid sweat from ev'ry pore descends;
Their bones resound with blows; sides, shoulders, thighs,
Swell to each gripe, and bloody tumours rise. POPE.

of Agandecca, and raise to joy his grief. But, Oscar, Fillan, and Ryno, ye children of the race! pursue the rest of Lochlin over the heath of Lena; that no vessel may hereafter bound on the dark-rolling waves of Inistore."

They flew like lightning over the heath. He slowly moved as a cloud of thunder when the sultry plain of summer is silent. His sword is before him as a sunbeam, terrible as the streaming meteor of night. He came toward a chief of Lochlin, and spoke to the son of the wave.

"Who is that like a cloud at the rock of the roaring stream? He cannot bound over its course; yet stately is the chief! his bossy shield is on his side; and his spear like the tree of the desart. Youth of the dark-brown hair, art thou of Fingal's foes?"

"I am a son of Lochlin," he cries, "and strong is my arm in war. My spouse is weeping at home, but Orla [1] will never return."

"Or fights, or yields the hero?" said Fingal of the noble deeds; "foes do not conquer in my presence; but my friends are renowned in the hall. Son of the wave, follow me; partake the feast of my shells; pursue the deer of my desart; and be the friend of Fingal."

"No," said the hero, "I assist the feeble: my strength shall remain with the weak in arms. My sword has been always unmatched, O warrior: let the king of Morven yield."

"I never yielded, Orla! Fingal never yielded to man. Draw thy sword, and chuse thy foe. Many are my heroes."

"And does the king refuse the combat?" said Orla of the dark-brown hair. "Fingal is a match for Orla: and he alone of all his race. But, king of Morven, if I shall fall, (as one time the warrior must die;) raise my tomb in the midst, and let it be the greatest on

[1] The story of Orla is so beautiful and affecting in the original, that many are in possession of it in the north of Scotland, who never heard a syllable of the poem. It varies the action, and awakes the attention of the reader, when he expected nothing but langour in the conduct of the poem, as the great action was over in the conquest of Swaran.

Lena. And send, over the dark-blue wave, the sword of Orla to the spouse of his love, that she may show it to her son, with tears, to kindle his soul to war."

"Son of the mournful tale," said Fingal, "why dost thou awaken my tears? One day the warriors must die, and the children see their useless arms in the hall. But, Orla, thy tomb shall rise, and thy white-bosomed spouse weep over thy sword."

They fought on the heath of Lena, but feeble was the arm of Orla. The sword of Fingal descended, and cleft his shield in twain. It fell, and glittered on the ground as the moon on the stream of night.

"King of Morven," said the hero, "lift thy sword and pierce my breast. Wounded and faint from battle, my friends have left me here. The mournful tale shall come to my love on the banks of the streamy Loda; when she is alone in the wood, and the rustling blast in the leaves."

"No," said the king of Morven; "I will never wound thee, Orla. On the banks of Loda let her see thee escaped from the hands of war. Let thy grey-haired father, who, perhaps, is blind with age, hear the sound of thy voice in his hall. With joy let the hero rise, and search for his son with his hands."

"But never will he find him, Fingal;" said the youth of the streamy Loda. "On Lena's heath I shall die; and foreign bards will talk of me. My broad belt covers my wound of death. And now I give it to the wind."

The dark blood poured from his side, he fell pale on the heath of Lena. Fingal bends over him as he dies, and calls his younger heroes.

"Oscar and Fillan, my sons, raise high the memory of Orla. Here let the dark-haired hero rest, far from the spouse of his love. Here let him rest in his narrow house, far from the sound of Loda. The sons of the feeble will find his bow at home, but will not be able to bend it. His faithful dogs howl on his hills, and his boars, which he used to pursue, rejoice. Fallen is the arm of battle; the mighty among the valiant is low!

" Exalt the voice, and blow the horn, ye sons of the king of Morven! let us go back to Swaran, and send the night away in song. Fillan, Oscar, and Ryno, fly over the heath of Lena. Where, Ryno, art thou, young son of fame? thou art not wont to be the last to answer thy father."

" Ryno," said Ullin, first of bards, " is with the awful forms of his fathers; with Trathal king of shields, and Trenmor of the mighty deeds. The youth is low, the youth is pale; he lies on Lena's heath."

" And fell the swiftest in the race," said the king, " the first to bend the bow? Thou scarce hast been known to me: why did young Ryno fall? But sleep thou softly on Lena, Fingal shall soon behold thee. Soon shall my voice be heard no more, and my footsteps cease to be seen. The bards will tell of Fingal's name; the stones will talk of me. But, Ryno, thou art low indeed, thou hast not received thy fame. Ullin, strike the harp for Ryno, tell what the chief would have been. Farewel, thou first on every field. No more shall I direct thy dart. Thou that hast been so fair: I behold thee not. Farewel."

The tear is on the cheek of the king; for terrible was his son in war. His son! that was like a beam of fire by night on the hill; when the forests sink down in its course, and the traveller trembles at the sound.

" Whose fame is in that dark green tomb?" begun the king of generous shells; " four stones with their heads of moss stand there, and mark the narrow house of death. Near it let my Ryno rest, and be the neighbour of the valiant. Perhaps some chief of fame is here to fly with my son on clouds. O Ullin, raise the songs of other times. Bring to memory the dark dwellers of the tomb. If in the field of the valiant they never fled from danger, my son shall rest with them, far from his friends, on the heath of Lena."

" Here," said the mouth of the song, " here rest the first of heroes. Silent is Lamderg [m] in this tomb, and

[m] Lamh-dhearg signifies 'bloody hand.' Gelchessa, 'white legged.' Tuathal, 'surly.' Ulladda, 'long-beard.' Ferchios, 'the conqueror of men.'

Ullin king of swords. And who, soft smiling from her cloud, shews me her face of love? Why, daughter, why so pale art thou, first of the maids of Cromla? Dost thou sleep with the foes in battle, Gelchossa, white-bosomed daughter of Tuathal? Thou hast been the love of thousands, but Lamderg was thy love. He came to Selma's mossy towers, and, striking his dark buckler, spoke.—

"Where is Gelchossa, my love, the daughter of the noble Tuathal? I left her in the hall of Selma, when I fought with the gloomy Ulfadda. Return soon, O Lamderg, she said, for here I am in the midst of sorrow. Her white breast rose with sighs. Her cheek was wet with tears. But I see her not coming so meet me; and to soothe my soul after battle. Silent is the hall of my joy; I hear not the voice of the bard. Bran [n] does not shake his chains at the gate, glad at the coming of Lamderg. Where is Gelchossa, my love, the mild daughter of the generous Tuathal?"

"Lamderg," says Ferchios the son of Aidon, "Gelchossa may be on Cromla; she and the maids of the bow pursuing the flying deer!"

"Ferchios!" replied the chief of Cromla, "no noise meets the ear of Lamderg. No sound is in the woods of Lena. No deer fly in my sight. No panting dog pursues. I see not Gelchossa my love, fair as the full moon setting on the hills of Cromla. Go, Ferchios, go to Allad [o] the grey-haired son of the rock. His dwelling is in the circle of stones. He may know of Gelchossa."

The son of Aidon went and spoke to the ear of age. "Allad: thou that dwellest in the rock, thou that tremblest alone, what saw thine eyes of age?"

"I saw," answered Allad the old, "Ullin the son of Cairbar. He came like a cloud from Cromla; and he

n Bran is a common name of grey-hounds to this day. It is a custom in the north of Scotland, to give the names of the heroes mentioned in this poem to their dogs; a proof that they are familiar to the ear, and their fame generally known.

o Allad is plainly a druid; he is called the son of the rock, from his dwelling in a cave; and the circle of stones here mentioned is the pale of the druidical temple. He is here consulted as one who had a supernatural knowledge of things: from the druids, no doubt, came the ridiculous notion of the second sight, which prevailed in the Highlands and isles.

hummed a surly song like a blast in a leafless wood. He entered the hall of Selma. "Lamderg," he said, "most dreadful of men, fight or yield to Ullin." "Lamderg," replied Gelchossa, "the son of the battle is not here. He fights Ulfadda, mighty chief. He is not here, thou first of men. But Lamderg never yielded. He will fight the son of Cairbar."

"Lovely art thou," said terrible Ullin, "daughter of the generous Tuathal. I carry thee to Cairbar's halls. The valiant shall have Gelchossa. Three days I remain on Cromla, to wait the son of battle, Lamderg. On the fourth Gelchossa is mine, if the mighty Lamderg flies."

"Allad!" said the chief of Cromla, "peace to thy dreams in the cave. Ferchios, sound the horn of Lamderg, that Ullin may hear on Cromla. Lamderg[q], like a roaring storm, ascended the hill from Selma. He hummed a surly song as he went, like the noise of a falling stream. He stood like a cloud on the hill, that varies its form to the wind. He rolled a stone, the sign of war. Ullin heard in Cairbar's hall. The hero heard with joy his foe, and took his father's spear. A smile brightens his dark-brown cheek, as he places his sword by his side. The dagger glittered in his hand. He whistled as he went.

"Gelchossa saw the silent chief, as a wreath of mist ascending the hill. She struck her white and heaving breast; and silent, tearful, feared for Lamderg.

"Cairbar, hoary chief of shells," said the maid of the tender hand; "I must bend the bow on Cromla; for I see the dark-brown hinds."

She hasted up the hill. In vain! the gloomy heroes fought. Why should I tell the king of Morven how wrathful heroes fight! Fierce Ullin fell. Young Lamderg came all pale to the daughter of generous Tuathal.

"What blood, my love," the soft-haired woman said, "what blood runs down my warrior's side!" "It is Ullin's blood," the chief replied, "thou fairer than the

q The reader will find this passage altered from what it was in the fragments of ancient poetry. It is delivered down very differently by tradition, and the translator has chosen that reading which savours least of bombast.

snow of Cromla! Gelchossa, let me rest here a little while." The mighty Lamderg died.

"And sleepest thou so soon on earth, O chief of shady Cromla? Three days she mourned beside her love. The hunters found her dead. They raised this tomb above the three. Thy son, O king of Morven, may rest here with heroes."

"And here my son shall rest," said Fingal, "the noise of their fame has reached my ears. Fillan and Fergus! bring hither Orla; the pale youth of the streamy Loda. Not unequalled shall Ryno lie in earth, when Orla is by his side. Weep, ye daughters of Morven; and ye maids of the streamy Loda. Like a tree they grew on the hills; and they have fallen like the oak[r] of the desart; when it lies across a stream, and withers in the wind of the mountain.

"Oscar! chief of every youth! thou seest how they have fallen. Be thou, like them, on earth renowned. Like them the song of bards. Terrible was their forms in battle; but calm was Ryno in the days of peace. He was like the bow of the shower seen far distant on the stream, when the sun is setting on Mora, and silence on the hill of deer. Rest, youngest of my sons, rest, O Ryno, on Lena. We too shall be no more; for the warrior one day must fall."

Such was thy grief, thou king of hills, when Ryno lay on earth. What must the grief of Ossian be, for thou thyself art gone. I hear not thy distant voice on Cona. My eyes perceive thee not. Often forlorn and dark I sit at thy tomb; and feel it with my hands. When I think I hear thy voice; it is but the blast of the desart. Fingal has long since fallen asleep, the ruler of the war.

Then Gaul and Ossian sat with Swaran on the soft green banks of Lubar. I touched the harp to please the king. But gloomy was his brow. He rolled his red eyes towards Lena. The hero mourned his people.

I lifted my eyes to Cromla, and I saw the son of generous Semo. Sad and slow he retired from his hill

r ——————as the mountain oak
Nods to the ax, till with a groaning sound
It sinks, and spreads its honours on the ground. POPE.

towards the lonely cave of Tura. He saw Fingal victorious, and mixed his joy with grief. The sun is bright on his armour, and Connal slowly followed. They sunk behind the hill like two pillars of the fire of night; when winds pursue them over the mountain, and the flaming heath resounds. Beside a stream of roaring foam his cave is in a rock. One tree bends above it; and the rushing winds echo against its sides. Here rests the chief of Dunscaich, the son of generous Semo. His thoughts are on the battle he lost; and the tear is on his cheek. He mourned the departure of his fame, that fled like the mist of Cona. O Bragela, thou art too far remote to cheer the soul of the hero. But let him see thy bright form in his soul; that his thoughts may return to the lonely sun-beam of Dunscaich.

Who comes with the locks of age? It is the son of song. Hail, Carril of other times! thy voice is like the harp in the halls of Tura. Thy words are pleasant as the shower that falls on the field of the sun. Carril of the times of old, why comest thou from the son of the generous Semo?

"Ossian, king of swords," replied the bard, "thou best raisest the song. Long hast thou been known to Carril, thou ruler of battles. Often have I touched the harp to lovely Everallin. Thou too hast often accompanied my voice in Branno's hall of generous shells. And often, amidst our voices, was heard the mildest Everallin. One day she sung of Cormac's fall, the youth that died for her love. I saw the tears on her cheek, and on thine, thou chief of men. Her soul was touched for the unhappy, though she loved him not. How fair among a thousand maids was the daughter of the generous Branno!"

"Bring not, Carril," I replied, "bring not her memory to my mind. My soul must melt at the remembrance. My eyes must have their tears. Pale in the earth is she, the softly-blushing fair of my love. But sit thou on the heath, O bard, and let us hear thy voice. It is pleasant as the gale of spring that sighs on the hunter's ear; when he wakens from dreams of joy, and has heard the music of the spirits of the hill."

FINGAL.

The Argument.

Night comes on. Fingal gives a feast to his army, at which Swaran is present. The king commands Ullin his bard to give the song of peace; a custom always observed at the end of a war. Ullin relates the actions of Trenmor, great-grandfather to Fingal, in Scandinavia, and his marriage with Inibaca, the daughter of a king of Lochlin, who was ancestor to Swaran; which consideration, together with his being brother to Agandecca, with whom Fingal was in love in his youth, induced the king to release him, and permit him to return with the remains of his army into Lochlin, upon his promising never to return to Ireland in a hostile manner. The night is spent in settling Swaran's departure, in songs of bards, and in a conversation in which the story of Grumal is introduced by Fingal. Morning comes. Swaran departs; Fingal goes on a hunting party; and finding Cuthullin in the cave of Tura, comforts him, and sets sail the next day for Scotland; which concludes the poem.

BOOK VI[1].

The clouds of night come rolling down, and rest on Cromla's dark-brown steep. The stars of the north arise over the rolling of the waves of Ullin; they show their heads of fire through the flying mist of heaven. A distant wind roars in the wood; but silent and dark is the plain of death.

Still on the darkening Lena arose in my ears the tuneful voice of Carril. He sung of the companions of our youth, and the days of former years; when we met on the banks of Lego, and sent round the joy of the shell. Cromla with its cloudy steep answered to his voice. The ghosts of those he sung came in the rustling blasts. They were seen to bend with joy towards the sound of their praise.

Be thy soul blest, O Carril, in the midst of the eddying winds. O that thou wouldst come to my hall, when I am alone by night! And thou dost come, my friend, I hear often thy light hand on my harp: when it hangs on the distant wall, and the feeble sound touches my ear. Why dost thou not speak to me in my grief, and tell when I shall behold my friends? But

[1] This book opens with the fourth night, and ends on the morning of the sixth day. The time of five days, five nights, and a part of the sixth day, is taken up in the poem. The scene lies in the heath of Lena, and the mountain Cromla on the coast of Ulster.

thou passest away in thy murmuring blast: and thy wind whistles in the grey hair of Ossian.

Now on the side of Mora the heroes gathered to the feast. A thousand aged oaks are burning to the wind. The strength[t] of the shells goes round, and the souls of warriors brighten with joy. But the king of Lochlin is silent, and sorrow reddens in the eye of his pride. He often turned toward Lena, and remembered that he fell.

Fingal leaned on the shield of his fathers. His grey locks slowly waved on the wind, and glittered to the beam of night. He saw the grief of Swaran, and spoke to the first of bards.

"Raise, Ullin, raise the song of peace, and soothe my soul after battle, that my ear may forget the noise of arms. And let a hundred harps be near to gladden the king of Lochlin. He must depart from us with joy. —None ever went sad from Fingal. Oscar! the lightning of my sword is against the strong in battle; but peaceful it lies by my side when warriors yield in war."

"Trenmor[u]," said the mouth of the songs, "lived in the days of other years. He bounded over the waves of the north; companion of the storm. The high rocks of the land of Lochlin, and its groves of murmuring sounds appear to the hero through the mist; he bound his white-bosomed sails. Trenmor pursued the boar that roared along the woods of Gormal. Many had fled from its presence; but the spear of Trenmor slew it.

"Three chiefs, that beheld the deed, told of the mighty stranger. They told that he stood like a pillar of fire in the bright arms of his valour. The king of Lochlin prepared the feast; and called the blooming

t By the strength of the shell is meant the liquor the heroes drunk; of what kind it was, cannot be ascertained at this distance of time. The translator has met with several ancient poems, that mention wax-lights and wine as common in the halls of Fingal. The names of both are borrowed from the Latin, which plainly shows that our ancestors had them from the Romans, if they had them at all. The Caledonians, in their frequent incursions to the province, might become acquainted with those conveniencies of life, and introduce them into their own country, among the booty which they carried from South Britain.

u Trenmor was great-grandfather to Fingal. The story is introduced to facilitate the dismission of Swaran.

Trenmor. Three days he feasted at Gormal's windy towers; and got his choice in the combat.

" The land of Lochlin had no hero that yielded not to Trenmor. The shell of joy went round with songs in praise of the king of Morven; he that came over the waves, the first of mighty men.

" Now when the fourth grey morn arose, the hero launched his ship; and walking along the silent shore, waited for the rushing wind. For loud and distant he heard the blast murmuring in the grove.

" Covered over with arms of steel a son of the woody Gormal appeared. Red was his cheek, and fair his hair. His skin like the snow of Morven. Mild rolled his blue and smiling eye when he spoke to the king of swords.

" Stay, Trenmor, stay, thou first of men, thou hast not conquered Lonval's son. My sword has often met the brave. And the wise shun the strength of my bow."

" Thou fair-haired youth," Trenmor replied, " I will not fight with Lonval's son. Thine arm is feeble, sun-beam of beauty. Retire to Gormal's dark-brown hinds."

" But I will retire," replied the youth, " with the sword of Trenmor; and exult in the sound of my fame. The virgins shall gather with smiles around him who conquered Trenmor. They shall sigh with the sighs of love, and admire the length of thy spear; when I shall carry it among thousands, and lift the glittering point to the sun."

" Thou shalt never carry my spear," said the angry king of Morven. " Thy mother shall find thee pale on the shore of the echoing Gormal; and looking over the dark-blue deep, see the sails of him that slew her son."

" I will not lift the spear," replied the youth, " my arm is not strong with years. But with the feathered dart I have learned to pierce a distant foe. Throw down that heavy mail of steel; for Trenmor is covered all over. I first will lay my mail on earth. Throw now thy dart, thou king of Morven."

He saw the heaving of her breast. It was the sister of the king. She had seen him in the halls of Gormal; and loved his face of youth. The spear dropt from the hand of Trenmor! he bent his red cheek to the ground, for he had seen her like a beam of light that meets the sons of the cave, when they revisit the fields of the sun, and bend their aching eyes.

" Chief of the windy Morven," begun the maid of the arms of snow; " let me rest in thy bounding ship, far from the love of Corla. For he, like the thunder of the desart, is terrible to Inibaca. He loves me in the gloom of his pride, and shakes ten thousand spears!"

" Rest thou in peace," said the mighty Trenmor, " behind the shield of my fathers. I will not fly from the chief, though he shakes ten thousand spears!"

Three days he waited on the shore; and sent his horn abroad. He called Corla to battle from all his echoing hills. But Corla came not to battle. The king of Lochlin descended. He feasted on the roaring shore; and gave the maid to Trenmor.

" King of Lochlin," said Fingal, " thy blood flows in the veins of thy foe. Our families met in battle, because they loved the strife of spears. But often did they feast in the hall, and send round the joy of the shell. Let thy face brighten with gladness, and thine ear delight in the harp. Dreadful as the storm of thine ocean thou hast poured thy valour forth: thy voice has been like the voice of thousands when they engage in battle. Raise, to-morrow, thy white sails to the wind, thou brother of Agandecca. Bright as the beam of noon she comes on my mournful soul. I saw thy tears for the fair one, and spared thee in the halls of Starno; when my sword was red with slaughter, and my eye full of tears for the maid. Or dost thou chuse the fight? The combat which thy fathers gave to Trenmor is thine: that thou mayest depart renowned like the sun setting in the west."

" King of the race of Morven," said the chief of the waves of Lochlin; " never will Swaran fight with thee, first of a thousand heroes! I saw thee in the halls of

Starno, and few were thy years beyond my own. When shall I, said I to my soul, lift the spear like the noble Fingal? We have fought heretofore, O warrior, on the side of the shaggy Malmor; after my waves had carried me to thy halls, and the feast of a thousand shells was spread. Let the bards send his fame who overcame to future years, for noble was the strife of Malmor.

"But many of the ships of Lochlin have lost their youths on Lena. Take these, thou king of Morven; and be the friend of Swaran: and when thy sons shall come to the mossy towers of Gormal, the feast of shells shall be spread, and the combat offered on the vale."

"Nor ship," replied the king, "shall Fingal take, nor land of many hills. The desart is enough to me, with all its deer and woods. Rise on thy waves again, thou noble friend of Agandecca. Spread thy white sails to the beam of the morning, and return to the echoing hills of Gormal."

"Blest be thy soul, thou king of shells," said Swaran of the dark-brown shield. "In peace thou art the gale of spring; in war, the mountain-storm. Take now my hand in friendship, thou noble king of Morven. Let thy bards mourn those who fell. Let Erin give the sons of Lochlin to earth, and raise the mossy stones of their fame; that the children of the north hereafter may behold the place where their fathers fought; and some hunter may say, when he leans on a mossy tomb, here Fingal and Swaran fought, the heroes of other years. Thus hereafter shall he say, and our fame shall last for ever!"

"Swaran," said the king of the hills, "to-day our fame is greatest. We shall pass away like a dream. No sound will be in the field of our battles. Our tombs will be lost in the heath. The hunter shall not know the place of our rest. Our names may be heard in song, but the strength of our arms will cease. O Ossian, Carril, and Ullin, you know of heroes that are no more. Give us the song of other years. Let the night pass away on the sound, and morning return with joy."

We gave the song to the kings, and an hundred harps accompanied our voice. The face of Swaran brightened like the full moon of heaven, when the clouds vanish away, and leave her calm and broad in the midst of the sky.

It was then that Fingal spoke to Carril the chief of other times. "Where is the son of Semo; the king of the isle of mist? has he retired, like the meteor of death, to the dreary cave of Tura?"

"Cuthullin," said Carril of other times, "lies in the dreary cave of Tura. His hand is on the sword of his strength. His thoughts on the battle which he lost. Mournful is the king of spears; for he has often been victorious. He sends the sword of his war to rest on the side of Fingal. For, like the storm of the desart, thou hast scattered all his foes. Take, O Fingal, the sword of the hero; for his fame is departed like mist when it flies before the rustling wind of the vale."

"No;" replied the king, "Fingal shall never take his sword. His arm is mighty in war; his fame shall never fail. Many have been overcome in battle, that have shone afterwards like the sun of heaven.

"O Swaran, king of the resounding woods, give all thy grief away. The vanquished, if brave, are renowned; they are like the sun in a cloud, when he hides his face in the south, but looks again on the hills of grass.

"Grumal was a chief of Cona. He fought the battle on every coast. His soul rejoiced in blood; his ear in the din of arms. He poured his warriors on the sounding Craca; and Craca's king met him from his grove; for then within the circle of Brumo[v] he spoke to the stone of power.

"Fierce was the battle of the heroes, for the maid of the breast of snow. The fame of the daughter of Craca had reached Grumal at the streams of Cona; he vowed to have the white-bosomed maid, or die on the echoing Craca: three days they strove together, and Grumal on the fourth was bound.

[v] This passage alludes to the religion of the king of Craca. See a note on a similar occasion in the third book.

" Far from his friends they placed him in the horrid circle of Brumo; where often, they said, the ghosts of the dead howled round the stone of their fear. But afterwards he shone like a pillar of the light of heaven. They fell by his mighty hand, and Grumal had his fame.

" Raise, ye bards of other times, raise high the praise of heroes; that my soul may settle on their fame; and the mind of Swaran cease to be sad."

They lay in the heath of Mora; the dark winds rustled over the heroes. A hundred voices at once arose, a hundred harps were strung; they sung of other times; and the mighty chiefs of former years.

When now shall I hear the bard, or rejoice at the fame of my fathers? The harp is not strung on Morven, nor the voice of music raised on Cona. Dead with the mighty is the bard: and fame is in the desart no more.

Morning trembles with the beam of the east, and glimmers on grey-headed Cromla. Over Lena is heard the horn of Swaran, and the sons of the ocean gather around. Silent and sad they mount the wave, and the blast of Ullin is behind their sails. White, as the mist of Morven, they float along the sea.

" Call," said Fingal, " call my dogs, the long-bounding sons of the chase. Call white-breasted Bran; and the surly strength of Luath. Fillan, and Ryno—but he is not here! My son rests on the bed of death. Fillan and Fergus, blow my horn, that the joy of the chase may arise; that the deer of Cromla may hear, and start at the lake of roes."

The shrill sound spread along the wood. The sons of heathy Cromla arise. A thousand dogs fly off at once, grey-bounding through the heath. A deer fell by every dog, and three by the white-breasted Bran. He brought them, in their flight, to Fingal, that the joy of the king might be great.

One deer fell at the tomb of Ryno; and the grief of Fingal returned. He saw how peaceful lay the stone of him who was the first at the chase. " No more shalt thou rise, O my son, to partake of the feast of Cromla.

DENHAM and DICKS EDITION OF OSSIAN's POEMS.

FINGAL & TILLAN, DISCOVERING
CUTHULLIN.
"It is the son of Semo! Gloomy
and Jadis the Hero!"
Vide Fingal Book 6.

Drawn by Raymond. Engraved by C. Warren Lond.

Soon will thy tomb be hid, and the grass grow rank on thy grave. The sons of the feeble shall pass over it, and shall not know that the mighty lie there.

" Ossian and Fillan, sons of my strength, and Gaul king of the blue swords of war, let us ascend the hill to the cave of Tura, and find the chief of the battles of Erin. Are these the walls of Tura? grey and lonely they rise on the heath. The king of shells is sad, and the halls are desolate. Come, let us find the king of swords, and give him all our joy. But is that Cuthullin, O Fillan, or a pillar of smoke on the heath? The wind of Cromla is on my eyes, and I distinguish not my friend."

" Fingal!" replied the youth, " it is the son of Semo. Gloomy and sad is the hero; his hand is on his sword. Hail to the son of battle, breaker of the shields!"

" Hail to thee!" replied Cuthullin, " hail to all the sons of Morven! Delightful is thy presence, O Fingal; it is like the sun on Cromla, when the hunter mourns his absence for a season, and sees him between the clouds. Thy sons are like stars that attend thy course, and give light in the night. It is not thus thou hast seen me, O Fingal, returning from the wars of the desart; when the king of the world[w] had fled, and joy returned to the hill of hinds."

" Many are thy words, Cuthullin," said Connan[x] of small renown. " Thy words are many, son of Semo, but where are thy deeds in arms? Why did we come over the ocean to aid thy feeble sword? Thou flyest to the cave of sorrow, and Connan fights thy battles: resign to me these arms of light; yield them, thou son of Erin."

" No hero," replied the chief, " ever sought the arms of Cuthullin; and had a thousand heroes sought them, it were in vain, thou gloomy youth. I fled not to the cave of sorrow, as long as Erin's warriors lived."

[w] This is the only passage in the poem, wherein the wars of Fingal against the Romans are alluded to: the Roman Emperor is distinguished in old compositions by the title of the king of the world.

[x] Connan was of the family of Morni. He is mentioned in several poems, and always appears with the same character. The poet passed him over in silence till now, and his behaviour here deserves no better usage.

" Youth of the feeble arm," said Fingal, " Connan, say no more. Cuthullin is renowned in battle, and terrible over the desart. Often have I heard thy fame, thou stormy chief of Inisfail. Spread now thy white sails for the isle of mist, and see Bragela leaning on her rock. Her tender eye is in tears, and the winds lift her long hair from her heaving breast. She listens to the winds of night to hear the voice of thy rowers[y]; to hear the song of the sea, and the sound of thy distant harp."

" And long shall she listen in vain; Cuthullin shall never return. How can I behold Bragela to raise the sigh of her breast? Fingal, I was always victorious in the battles of other spears!"

" And hereafter thou shalt be victorious," said Fingal king of shells. " The fame of Cuthullin shall grow like the branchy tree of Cromla. Many battles await thee, O chief, and many shall be the wounds of thy hand. Bring hither, Oscar, the deer, and prepare the feast of shells; that our souls may rejoice after danger, and our friends delight in our presence."

We sat, we feasted, and we sung. The soul of Cuthullin rose. The strength of his arms returned, and gladness brightened on his face. Ullin gave the song, and Carril raised the voice. I often joined the bards, and sung of battles of the spear. Battles! where I often fought: but now I fight no more. The fame of my former actions is ceased; and I sit forlorn at the tombs of my friends.

Thus they passed the night in the song; and brought back the morning with joy. Fingal arose on the heath, and shook his glittering spear. He moved first toward the plains of Lena, and we followed like a ridge of fire. " Spread the sail," said the king of Morven, " and catch the winds that pour from Lena." We rose on the wave with songs, and rushed, with joy, through the foam of the ocean.

y The practice of singing when they row is universal among the inhabitants of the north-west coast of Scotland and the isles. It deceives time, and inspirits the rowers.

COMALA:

A

DRAMATIC POEM.

Argument.

This poem is valuable on account of the light it throws on the antiquity of Ossian's compositions. The Caracul mentioned here, is the same with Caracalla, the son of Severus, who in the year 211 commanded an expedition against the Caledonians. The variety of the measure shows that the poem was originally set to music, and perhaps was presented before the chiefs upon solemn occasions. Tradition has handed down the story more complete than it is in the poem. "Comala, the daughter of Starno, king of Inistore or Orkney islands, fell in love with Fingal the son of Comhal at a feast, to which her father had invited him, (Fingal, B. III.) upon his return from Lochlin, after the death of Agandecca. Her passion was so violent, that she followed him, disguised like a youth, who wanted to be employed in his wars. She was soon discovered by Hidallan the son of Lamor, one of Fingal's heroes, whose love she had slighted some time before. Her romantic passion and beauty recommended her so much to the king, that he was resolved to make her his wife; when news was brought him of Caracul's expedition. He marched to stop the progress of the enemy, and Comala attended him. He left her on a hill, within sight of Caracul's army, when he himself went to the battle, having previously promised, if he survived, to return that night." The sequel of the story may be gathered from the poem itself.

THE PERSONS.

FINGAL.	MELILCOMA,	} *Daughters of* MORNI.
HIDALLAN.	DERSAGRENA,	
COMALA.	BARDS.	

DERSAGRENA.

THE chase is over. No noise on Ardven but the torrent's roar! Daughter of Morni, come from Crona's banks. Lay down the bow and take the harp. Let the night come on with songs, and our joy be great on Ardven.

MELIL.[a] And night comes on, thou blue-eyed maid. Grey night grows dim along the plain. I saw a deer at Crona's stream; a mossy bank he seemed through the

[a] Melilcoma, 'soft-rolling eye.'

gloom, but soon he bounded away. A meteor played round his branchy horns; and the awful faces of other times looked from the clouds of Crona.

[b] DERSA. These are the signs of Fingal's death. The king of shields is fallen! and Caracul prevails. Rise, Comala[c], from thy rocks; daughter of Sarno, rise in tears. The youth of thy love is low, and his ghost is already on our hills.

MELIL. There Comala sits forlorn! two grey dogs near shake their rough ears, and catch the flying breeze. Her red cheek rests on her arm, and the mountain wind is in her hair. She turns her blue-rolling eyes towards the field of his promise. Where art thou, O Fingal, for the night is gathering around?

COMALA. O Carun[d] of the streams! why do I behold thy waters rolling in blood? Has the noise of the battle been heard on thy banks; and sleeps the king of Morven? Rise, moon, thou daughter of the sky! look from between thy clouds, that I may behold the light of his steel, on the field of his promise. Or rather let the meteor, that lights our departed fathers through the night, come with its red light, to show me the way to my fallen hero. Who will defend me from sorrow? Who from the love of Hidallan? Long shall Comala look before she can behold Fingal in the midst of his host; bright as the beam of the morning in the cloud of an early shower.

[e] HIDAL. Roll thou mist of gloomy Crona, roll on the path of the hunter. Hide his steps from mine eyes, and let me remember my friend no more. The bands of battle are scattered, and no crowding steps are round the noise of his steel. O Carun, roll thy streams of blood, for the chief of the people fell.

b Dersagrena, 'the brightness of a sun-beam.'

c Comala, 'the maid of the pleasant brow.'

d Carun, or Clia'on, 'winding river.' This river retains still the name of Carron, and falls into the Forth some miles to the north of Falkirk.

e Hidallan was sent by Fingal to give notice to Comala of his return; he, to revenge himself on her for slighting his love some time before, told her that the king was killed in battle. He even pretended that he carried his body from the field to be buried in her presence; and this circumstance makes it probable that the poem was presented to her.

COMALA. Who fell on Carun's grassy banks, son of the cloudy night? Was he white as the snow of Ardven? Blooming as the bow of the shower? Was his hair like the mist of the hill, soft and curling in the day of the sun? Was he like the thunder of heaven in battle? Fleet as the roe of the desart?

HIDAL. O that I might behold his love, fair-leaning from her rock! Her red eye dim in tears, and her blushing cheek half hid in her locks! Blow, thou gentle breeze, and lift the heavy locks of the maid, that I may behold her white arm, and lovely cheek of her sorrow!

COMALA. And is the son of Comhal fallen, chief of the mournful tale? The thunder rolls on the hill! The lightning flies on wings of fire! But they frighten not Comala; for her Fingal fell. Say, chief of the mournful tale, fell the breaker of the shields?

HIDAL. The nations are scattered on their hills: for they shall hear the voice of the chief no more.

COMALA. Confusion pursue thee over thy plains; and destruction overtake thee, thou king of the world. Few be thy steps to thy grave; and let one virgin mourn thee. Let her be, like Comala, tearful in the days of her youth. Why hast thou told me, Hidallan, that my hero fell? I might have hoped a little while his return, and have thought I saw him on the distant rock; a tree might have deceived me with his appearance; and the wind of the hill been the sound of his horn in mine ear. O that I were on the banks of Carun! that my tears might be warm on his cheek!

HIDAL. He lies not on the banks of Carun: on Ardven heroes raise his tomb. Look on them, O moon, from thy clouds; be thy beam bright on his breast, that Comala may behold him in the light of his armour.

COMALA. Stop, ye sons of the grave, till I behold my love. He left me at the chase alone. I knew not that he went to war. He said he would return with the night; and the king of Morven is not returned! Why didst thou not tell me that he would fall, O trem-

bling son of the rock[f]? Thou hast seen him in the blood of his youth, but thou didst not tell Comala.

MELIL. What sound is that on Ardven? Who is that bright in the vale? Who comes like the strength of rivers, when their crowded waters glitter to the moon?

COMALA. Who is it but the foe of Comala, the son of the king of the world! Ghost of Fingal! do thou from thy cloud direct Comala's bow. Let him fall like the hart of the desart. It is Fingal in the crowd of his ghosts. Why dost thou come, my love, to frighten and please my soul?

FINGAL. Raise, ye bards of the song, the wars of the streamy Carun. Caracul has fled from my arms along the fields of his pride. He sets far distant like a meteor that incloses a spirit of night, when the winds drive it over the heath, and the dark woods are gleaming around. I heard a voice like the breeze of my hills. Is it the huntress of Galmal, the white-handed daughter of Sarno? Look from thy rocks, my love; and let me hear the voice of Comala.

COMALA. Take me to the cave of thy rest, O lovely son of death!

FINGAL. Come to the cave of my rest. The storm is over, and the sun is on our fields. Come to the cave of my rest, huntress of echoing Cona.

COMALA. He is returned with his fame; I feel the right hand of his battles. But I must rest beside the rock till my soul settle from fear. Let the harp be near; and raise the song, ye daughters of Morni.

DERSA. Comala has slain three deer on Ardven, and the fire ascends on the rock; go to the feast of Comala, king of the woody Morven!

FINGAL. Raise, ye sons of song, the wars of the streamy Carun; that my white-handed maid may rejoice, while I behold the feast of my love.

BARDS. Roll, streamy Carun, roll in joy, the sons of battle fled. The steed is not seen in our fields; an

[f] By the son of the rock she means a druid. It is probable that some of the order of the druids remained so late as the beginning of the reign of Fingal; and that Comala had consulted one of them concerning the event of the war with Caracul.

the wings of their pride[g] spread in other lands. The sun will now rise in peace, and the shadows descend in joy. The voice of the chase will be heard; and the shields hang in the hall. Our delight will be in the war of the ocean, and our hands be red in the blood of Lochlin. Roll, streamy Carun, roll in joy, the sons of battle fled.

MELIL. Descend, ye light mists from high; ye moon-beams, lift her soul. Pale lies the maid at the rock! Comala is no more!

FINGAL. Is the daughter of Sarno dead; the white-bosomed maid of my love? Meet me, Comala, on my heaths, when I sit alone at the streams of my hills.

HIDAL. Ceased the voice of the huntress of Gaul? Why did I trouble the soul of the maid? When shall I see thee, with joy, in the chase of the dark-brown hinds?

FINGAL. Youth of the gloomy brow; no more shalt thou feast in my halls. Thou shalt not pursue my chase, and my foes shall not fall by thy sword[h]. Lead me to the place of her rest that I may behold her beauty. Pale she lies at the rock, and the cold winds lift her hair. Her bow-string sounds in the blast, and her arrow was broken in her fall. Raise the praise of the daughter of Sarno, and give her name to the wind of the hills.

BARDS. See! meteors roll around the maid; and moon-beams lift her soul! Around her, from their clouds, bend the awful faces of her fathers; Sarno[i] of the gloomy brow; and the red-rolling eyes of Fidallan. When shall thy white hand arise, and thy voice be heard on our rocks? The maids shall seek thee on the heath, but they will not find thee. Thou shalt come, at times, to their dreams, and settle peace in their souls. Thy voice shall remain in their ears, and they shall think with joy on the dreams of their rest. Meteors roll around the maid, and moon beams lift her soul!

g Perhaps the poet alludes to the Roman eagle.

h The sequel of the story of Hidallan is introduced, as an episode, in the poem which immediately follows in this collection.

i Sarno the father of Comala died soon after the flight of his daughter. Fidallan was the first king that reigned in Inistore.

THE

WAR OF CAROS.

A POEM.

The Argument.

Caros is probably the noted usurper Carausius, by birth a Menapian, who assumed the purple in the year 284; and, seizing on Britain, defeated the emperor Maximinian Herculius in several naval engagements, which gives propriety to his being called in this poem the king of ships. He repaired Agricola's wall, in order to obstruct the incursions of the Caledonians; and when he was employed in that work, it appears he was attacked by a party under the command of Oscar the son of Ossian. This battle is the foundation of the present poem, which is addressed to Malvina the daughter of Toscar.

BRING, daughter of Toscar, bring the harp; the light of the song rises in Ossian's soul. It is like the field, when darkness covers the hills around, and the shadow grows slowly on the plain of the sun.

I behold my son, O Malvina, near the mossy rock of Crona[a]. But it is the mist of the desart tinged with the beam of the west: Lovely is the mist that assumes the form of Oscar! turn from it, ye winds, when ye roar on the side of Ardven.

Who comes towards my son, with the murmur of a song? His staff is in his hand, his grey hair loose on the wind Surely joy lightens his face; and he often looks back to Caros. It is Ryno [b] of the song, he that went to view the foe.

" What does Caros king of ships?" said the son of the now mournful Ossian; " spreads he the wings [c] of his pride, bard of the times of old?"

a Crona is the name of a small stream which runs into the Carron. On its banks is the scene of the preceding dramatic poem.

b Ryno is often mentioned in the ancient poetry. He seems to have been a bard of the first rank, in the days of Fingal.

c The Roman eagle.

" He spreads them, Oscar," replied the bard, but it is behind his gathered heap [d]. He looks over his stones with fear, and beholds thee, terrible as the ghost of night that rolls the waves to his ship."

" Go, thou first of my bards," says Oscar, " and take the spear of Fingal. Fix a flame on its point, and shake it to the winds of heaven. Bid him in songs to advance, and leave the rolling of his wave. Tell to Caros that I long for battle; and that my bow is weary of the chase of Cona. Tell him the mighty is not here; and that my arm is young."

He went with the murmur of his song. Oscar reared his voice on high. It reached his heroes on Ardven, like the noise of a cave, when the sea of Tongorma rolls before it, and its trees meet the roaring winds. They gather round my son like the streams of the hill, when, after rain, they roll in the pride of their course.

Ryno came to the mighty Caros, and struck his flaming spear. " Come to the battle of Oscar, O thou that sittest on the rolling of waters. Fingal is distant far; he hears the songs of his bards on Morven: and the wind of his hall is in his hair. His terrible spear is at his side; and his shield that is like the darkened moon. Come to the battle of Oscar; the hero is alone."

He came not over the streamy Carun [e]; the bard returned with his song. Grey night grows dim on Crona. The feast of shells is spread. A hundred oaks burn to the wind, and faint light gleams over the heath. The ghosts of Ardven pass through the beam, and show their dim and distant forms. Comala [f] is half unseen on her meteor; and Hidallan is sullen and dim, like the darkened moon behind the mist of night.

" Why art thou sad?" said Ryno; for he alone beheld the chief. " Why art thou sad, Hidallan, hast

d Agricola's wall, which Carausius repaired.

e The river Carron

f This is the scene of Comala's death, which is the subject of the dramatic poem: The poet mentions her in this place, in order to introduce the sequel of Hidallan's story, who, on account of her death, had been expelled from the wars of Fingal.

thou not received thy fame? The songs of Ossian have been heard, and thy ghost has brightened in the wind, when thou didst bend from thy cloud to hear the song of Morven's bard."

"And do thine eyes behold the hero," said Oscar, "like the dim meteor of night? Say, Ryno, say, how fell the chief that was so renowned in the days of our fathers? His name remains on the rocks of Cona; and I have often seen the streams of his hills."

Fingal, replied the bard, had driven Hidallan from his wars. The king's soul was sad for Comala, and his eyes could not behold Hidallan. Lonely, sad, along the heath, he slowly moved with silent steps. His arms hang disordered on his side. His hair flies loose from his helmet. The tear is in his down-cast eyes; and the sigh half silent in his breast. Three days he straved unseen, alone, before he came to Lamor's halls; the mossy halls of his fathers, at the stream of Balva[g]. There Lamor sat alone beneath a tree; for he had sent his people with Hidallan to war. The stream ran at his feet, and his grey head rested on his staff. Sightless are his aged eyes. He hums the song of other times. The noise of Hidallan's feet came to his ear; he knew the tread of his son.

"Is the son of Lamor returned; or is it the sound of his ghost? Hast thou fallen on the banks of Carun, son of the aged Lamor? Or, if I hear the sound of Hidallan's feet, where are the mighty in war? Where are my people, Hidallan, that were wont to return with their echoing shields? Have they fallen on the banks of Carun?"

"No:" replied the sighing youth, "the people of Lamor live. They are renowned in battle, my father; but Hidallan is renowned no more. I must sit, alone on the banks of Balva, when the roar of the battle grows."

"But thy fathers never sat alone," replied the rising pride of Lamor. "They never sat alone on the banks

g This is perhaps that small stream still retaining the name of Balva, which runs through the romantic valley of Glentivar in Stirlingshire. Balva signifies a silent stream; and Glentiver, the sequestered vale.

of Balva, when the roar of battle rose. Dost thou not behold that tomb! Mine eyes discern it not; there rests the noble Garmallon who never fled in war. Come, thou renowned in battle, he says, come to thy father's tomb. How am I renowned Garmallon? my son has fled from war!"

"King of the streamy Balva!" said Hidallan with a sigh, "why dost thou torment my soul? Lamor, I never feared. Fingal was sad for Comala, and denied his wars Hidallan: Go to the grey streams of thy land, he said, and moulder like a leafless oak, which the winds have bent over Balva, never more to grow!"

"And must I hear," Lamor replied, "the lonely tread of Hidallan's feet? When thousands are renowned in battle, shall he bend over my grey streams? Spirit of the noble Garmallon! carry Lamor to his place: his eyes are dark; his soul is sad: and his son has lost his fame!"

"Where," said the youth, "shall I search for fame to gladden the soul of Lamor? From whence shall I return with renown, that the sound of my arms may be pleasant in his ear? If I go to the chase of hinds, my name will not be heard. Lamor will not feel my dogs with his hands, glad at my arrival from the hill. He will not enquire of his mountains, or of the dark-brown deer of his desarts."

"I must fall," said Lamor, "like a leafless oak: it grew on a rock, but the winds have overturned it. My ghost will be seen on my hills, mournful for my young Hidallan. Will not ye, ye mists, as ye rise, hide him from my sight? My son! go to Lamor's hall: there the arms of our fathers hang. Bring the sword of Garmallon; he took it from a foe."

He went and brought the sword with all its studded thongs. He gave it to his father. The grey-haired hero felt the point with his hand.

"My son! lead me to Garmallon's tomb: it rises beside that rustling tree. The long grass is withered; I heard the breeze whistling there. A little fountain mur-

murs near, and sends its waters to Belva. There let me rest; it is noon: and the sun is on our fields."

He led him to Garmallon's tomb. Lamor pierced the side of his son. They sleep together; and their ancient halls moulder on Balva's banks. Ghosts are seen there at noon: the valley is silent, and the people shun the place of Lamor.

"Mournful is thy tale," said Oscar, "son of the times of old! My soul sighs for Hidallan; he fell in the days of his youth. He flies on the blast of the desart, and his wandering is in a foreign land. Sons of the echoing Morven! draw near to the foes of Fingal. Send the night away in songs; and watch the strength of Caros. Oscar goes to the people of other times; to the shades of silent Ardven; where his fathers sit dim in their clouds, and behold the future war. And art thou there, Hidallan, like a half-extinguished meteor? Come to my sight, in thy sorrow, chief of the roaring Balva!"

The heroes move with their songs. Oscar slowly ascends the hill. The meteors of night are setting on the heath before him. A distant torrent faintly roars. Unfrequent blasts rush through aged oaks. The half-enlightened moon sinks dim and red behind her hill. Feeble voices are heard on the heath. Oscar drew his sword.

"Come," said the hero, "O ye ghosts of my fathers! ye that fought against the kings of the world! Tell me the deeds of future times; and your converse in your caves: when you talk together and behold your sons in the fields of the valiant."

Trenmor came from his hill, at the voice of his mighty son. A cloud, like the steed of the stranger, supported his airy limbs. His robe is of the mist of Lano, that brings death to the people. His sword is a meteor half-extinguished. His face is without form, and dark. He sighed thrice over the hero: and thrice the winds of the night roared around. Many were his words to Oscar: but they only came by halves to our ears: they were dark as the tales of other times, before the light

of the song arose. He slowly vanished, like a mist that melts on the sunny hill. It was then, O daughter of Toscar, my son begun first to be sad. He foresaw the fall of his race; and, at times, he was thoughtful and dark: like the sun when he carries a cloud on his face; but he looks afterwards on the hills of Cona.

Oscar passed the night among his fathers; grey morning met him on the banks of Carun. A green vale surrounded a tomb which arose in the times of old. Little hills lift their heads at a distance; and stretch their old trees to the wind. The warriors of Caros sat there, for they had passed the stream by night. They appeared like the trunks of aged pines, to the pale light of the morning. Oscar stood at the tomb, and raised thrice his terrible voice. The rocking hills echoed around: the starting roes bounded away. And the trembling ghosts of the dead fled, shrieking on their clouds. So terrible was the voice of my son, when he called his friends.

A thousand spears rose around; the people of Caros rose. Why, daughter of Toscar, why that tear? My son, though alone, is brave. Oscar is like a beam of the sky; he turns around, and the people fall. His hand is like the arm of a ghost, when he stretches it from a cloud; the rest of his thin form is unseen: but the people die in the vale! My son beheld the approach of the foe; and he stood in the silent darkness of his strength. "Am I alone," said Oscar, "in the midst of a thousand foes? Many a spear is there! many a darkly rolling eye! Shall I fly to Ardven? But did my fathers ever fly! The mark of their arm is in a thousand battles. Oscar too will be renowned. Come, ye dim ghosts of my fathers, and behold my deeds in war! I may fall; but I will be renowned like the race of the echoing Morven." He stood dilated in his place, like a flood swelling in a narrow vale. The battle came, but they fell: bloody was the sword of Oscar.

The noise reached his people at Crona; they came like a hundred streams The warriors of Caros fled, and Oscar remained like a rock left by the ebbing sea.

Now dark and deep, with all his steeds, Caros rolled his might along: the little streams are lost in his course; and the earth is rocking round. Battle spreads from wing to wing: ten thousand swords gleam at once in the sky. But why should Ossian sing of battles? For never more shall my steel shine in war. I remember the days of my youth with sorrow, when I feel the weakness of my arm. Happy are they who fell in their youth; in the midst of their renown! They have not beheld the tombs of their friends: or failed to bend the bow of their strength. Happy art thou, O Oscar, in the midst of thy rushing blast. Thou often goest to the fields of thy fame, where Caros fled from thy lifted sword.

Darkness comes on my soul, O fair daughter of Toscar; I behold not the form of my son at Carun, nor the figure of Oscar on Crona. The rustling winds have carried him far away; and the heart of his father is sad.

But lead me, O Malvina, to the sound of my woods, and the roar of my mountain-streams. Let the chase be heard on Cona; that I may think on the days of other years. And bring me the harp, O maid, that I may touch it when the light of my soul shall arise. Be thou near, to learn the song; and future times shall hear of Ossian.

The sons of the feeble hereafter will lift the voice on Cona; and, looking up to the rocks, say, "Here Ossian dwelt." They shall admire the chiefs of old, and the race that are no more; while we ride on our clouds, Malvina, on the wings of the roaring winds. Our voices shall be heard, at times, in the desart; and we shall sing on the winds of the rock.

THE

WAR OF INIS-THONA:

A POEM.

The Argument.

This poem is an episode, introduced in a great work composed by Ossian, in which the actions of his friends, and his beloved son Oscar, were interwoven. The work itself is lost, but some episodes, and the story of the poem, are handed down by tradition. Inis-thona was an island of Scandinavia, subject to its own king, but depending upon the kingdom of Lochlin.

Our youth is like the dream of the hunter on the hill of heath. He sleeps in the mild beams of the sun; but he awakes amidst a storm, the red lightning flies around: and the trees shake their heads to the wind. He looks back with joy on the day of the sun, and the pleasant dreams of his rest!

When shall Ossian's youth return, or his ear delight in the sound of arms? When, shall I, like Oscar, travel in the light of my steel? Come, with your streams, ye hills of Cona, and listen to the voice of Ossian! The song rises, like the sun, in my soul: and my heart feels the joys of other times.

I behold thy towers, O Selma! and the oaks of thy shaded wall: thy streams sound in my ear; thy heroes gather round. Fingal sits in the midst; and leans on the shield of Trenmor: his spear stands against the wall; he listens to the song of his bards. The deeds of his arm are heard; and the actions of the king in his youth.

Oscar had returned from the chase, and heard the hero's praise. He took the shield of Branno[a] from the wall; his eyes were filled with tears. Red was the

a This is Branno, the father of Everallin and grandfather to Oscar; he was of Irish extraction, and lord of the country round the lake of Lego. His great actions are handed down by tradition, and his hospitality has passed into a proverb.

cheek of youth. His voice was trembling low. My spear shook its bright head in his hand; he spoke to Morven's king.

" Fingal ! thou king of heroes ! Ossian, next to him in war ! ye have fought the battle in your youth ; your names are renowned in song. Oscar is like the mist of Cona : I appear and vanish. The bard will not know my name. The hunter will not search in the heath for my tomb. Let me fight, O heroes, in the battles of Inis-thona. Distant is the land of my war ! Ye shall not hear of Oscar's fall. Some bard may find me there, and give my name to the song. The daughter of the stranger shall see my tomb, and weep over the youth that came from afar. The bard shall say at the feast, hear the song of Oscar from the distant land."

" Oscar," replied the king of Morven ; " thou shalt fight, son of my fame ! Prepare my dark-bosomed ship to carry my hero to Inis-thona. Son of my son, regard our fame ; for thou art of the race of renown. Let not the children of strangers say, feeble are the sons of Morven ! Be thou in battle, like the roaring storm : mild as the evening sun in peace. Tell, Oscar, to Inis-thona's king, that Fingal remembers his youth ; when we strove in the combat together in the days of Agan-decca."

They lifted up the sounding sail ; the wind whistled through the thongs [b] of their masts. Waves lashed the oozy rocks : the strength of ocean roared. My son beheld, from the wave, the land of groves. He rushed into the echoing bay of Runa ; and sent his sword to Annir king of spears. The grey-haired hero rose, when he saw the sword of Fingal. His eyes were full of tears ; and he remembered the battles of their youth. Twice they lifted the spear before the lovely Agan-decca : heroes stood far distant, as if two ghosts con-tended.

" But now," begun the king, " I am old ; the sword lies useless in my hall. Thou art of Morven's race ! Annir has been in the strife of spears ; but he is pale

[b] Leather thongs were used in Ossian's time, instead of ropes.

and withered now, like the oak of Lano. I have no son to meet thee with joy, or to carry thee to the halls of his fathers. Argon is pale in the tomb, and Ruro is no more. My daughter is in the hall of strangers, and longs to behold my tomb. Her spouse shakes ten thousand spears; and comes [c] like a cloud of death from Lano. Come thou to share the feast of Annir, son of echoing Morven."

Three days they feasted together; on the fourth Annir heard the name of Oscar[d]. They rejoiced in the shell[e]; and pursued the bears of Runa. Beside the fount of mossy stones, the weary heroes rest. The tear steals in secret from Annir: and he broke the rising sigh. "Here darkly rest," the hero said, "the children of my youth. This stone is the tomb of Ruro: that tree sounds over the grave of Argon. Do ye hear my voice, O my sons, within your narrow house? Or do ye speak in these rustling leaves, when the winds of the desart rise?

"King of Inis-thona," said Oscar, "how fell the children of youth? The wild boar often rushes over their tombs, but he does not disturb the hunters. They pursue deer[f] formed of clouds, and bend their airy-bow. They still love the sport of their youth; and mount the wind with joy."

"Cormalo," replied the king, "is chief of ten thousand spears; he dwells as the dark-rolling waters of Lano[g]; which send forth the cloud of death. He came to Runa's echoing halls, and sought the honour of the

c Cormalo had resolved on a war against his father-in-law, Annir, king of Inis-thona, in order to depose him and of his kingdom. The injustice of such designs was so much resented by Fingal, that he sent his grandson Oscar, to the assistance of Annir. Both armies came to a battle, in which the conduct and valour of Oscar obtained a complete victory. An end was put to the war by the death of Cormalo, who fell in single combat, by Oscar's hand. Thus is the story delivered down by tradition; though the poet, to raise the character of his son, makes Oscar himself propose the expedition.

d It was thought, in those days of heroism, an infringement upon the laws of hospitality, to ask the name of a stranger, before he had feasted three days in the great hall of the family. 'He that asks the name of a stranger,' is to this day, an approbrious term, used, in the north, to the inhospitable.

e 'In the shell' is a phrase for feasting sumptuously, and drinking freely.

f The notion of Ossian concerning the state of the deceased, was the same with that of the ancient Greeks and Romans. They imagined that the soul pursued, in their separate state, the employments and pleasures of their former life.

g Lano was a lake of Scandinavia, remarkable in the days of Ossian, for emitting a pestilential vapour in autumn. "And thou, O valiant Duchomar, like the mist of marshy Lano, when it sails over the plains of autumn, and brings death to the people." Fingal, B. I.

spear [b]. The youth was lovely as the first beam of the sun! and few were they who could meet him in fight! My heroes yielded to Cormalo: and my daughter loved the son of Lano. Argon and Ruro returned from the chase; the tears of their pride descended. They rolled their silent eyes on Runa's heroes, because they yielded to a stranger: three days they feasted with Cormalo: on the fourth my Argon fought. But who could fight with Argon? Lano's chief was overcome. His heart swelled with the grief of pride, and he resolved in secret to behold the death of my sons. They went to the hills of Runa, and pursued the dark-brown hinds. The arrow of Cormalo flew in secret; and my children fell. He came to the maid of his love; to Inis-thona's dark-haired maid. They fled over the desart, and Annir remained alone. Night came on, and day appeared; nor Argon's voice, nor Ruro's came. At length their much-loved dog is seen; the fleet and bounding Runar. He came into the hall and howled; and seemed to look towards the place of their fall. We followed him: we found them there: and laid them by this mossy stream. This is the haunt of Annir, when the chase of the hinds is over. I bend like the trunk of an aged oak above them: and my tears for ever flow."

"O Ronnan!" said the rising Oscar, "Ogar king of spears! call my heroes to my side, the sons of streamy Morven. To-day we go to Lano's water that sends forth the cloud of death. Cormalo will not long rejoice: death is often at the point of our swords."

They came over the desart like stormy clouds, when the winds roll them over the heath: their edges are tinged with lightning: and the echoing groves foresee the storm. The horn of Oscar's battle was heard; and Lano shook in all its waves. The children of the lake convened around the sounding shield of Cormalo. Oscar fought, as he was wont in battle. Cormalo fell beneath his sword: and the sons of the dismal Lano fled to their secret vales. Oscar brought the daugh-

[b] By the honour of the spear is meant a kind of tournament practised among the ancient northern nations.

ter of Inis-thona to Annir's echoing halls. The face of age was bright with joy; he blest the king of swords.

How great was the joy of Ossian, when he beheld the distant sail of his son! it was like a cloud of light that rises in the east, when the traveller is sad in a land unknown, and dismal night with her ghosts is sitting around him. We brought him, with songs, to Selma's halls. Fingal ordered the feast of shells to be spread. A thousand bards raised the name of Oscar: and Morven answered to the noise. The daughter of Toscar was there, and her voice was like the harp: when the distant sound comes, in the evening, on the soft-rustling breeze of the vale.

O lay me, ye that see the light, near some rock of my hills; let the thick hazels be around, let the rustling oak be near. Green be the place of my rest; and let the sound of the distant torrent be heard. Daughter of Toscar, take the harp, and raise the lovely song of Selma; that sleep may overtake my soul in the midst of joy; that the dreams of my youth may return, and the days of the mighty Fingal. Selma! I behold thy towers, thy trees, and shaded walls. I see the heroes of Morven: and hear the song of bards. Oscar lifts the sword of Cormalo, and a thousand youths admire its studded thongs. They look with wonder on my son! and admire the strength of his arm. They mark the joy of his father's eyes; they long for an equal fame. And ye shall have your fame, O ye sons of streamy Morven. My soul is often brightened with the song; and I remember the companions of my youth. But sleep descends with the sound of the harp; and pleasant dreams begin to rise. Ye sons of the chase stand far distant, nor disturb my rest. The bard of other times converses now with his fathers, the chiefs of the days of old. Sons of the chase stand far distant; disturb not the dreams of Ossian.

THE

BATTLE OF LORA:

A POEM.

The Argument.

Fingal, on his return from Ireland, after he had expelled Swaran from that kingdom, made a feast to all his heroes; he forgot to invite Ma-ronnan and Aldo, two chiefs, who had not been along with him on his expedition. They resented his neglect: and went over to Erragon king of Sora, a country of Scandinavia, the declared enemy of Fingal. The valour of Aldo soon gained him a great reputation in Sora; and Lorma, the beautiful wife of Erragon fell in love with him. He found means to escape with her, and to come to Fingal, who resided then in Selma, on the western coast. Erragon invaded Scotland, and was slain in battle by Gaul the son of Morni, after he had rejected terms of peace offered him by Fingal. In this war Aldo fell in a single combat, by the hands of his rival Erragon; and the unfortunate Lorma afterwards died of grief.

Son of the distant land, who dwellest in the secret cell! do I hear the sound of thy grove? or is it the voice of thy songs? The torrent was loud in my ear, but I heard a tuneful voice; dost thou praise the chiefs of thy land; or the spirits[a] of the wind? But, lonely dweller of the rocks! look over that heathy plain: thou seest green tombs, with their rank whistling grass; with their stones of mossy heads; thou seest them, son of the rock; but Ossian's eyes have failed.

A mountain stream comes roaring down and sends its waters round a green hill: four mossy stones, in the midst of withered grass, rear their heads on the top: two trees, which the storms have bent, spread their whistling branches around. This is thy dwelling, Erragon[b]; this thy narrow house; the sound of thy shells has been long forgot in Sora: and thy shield is become dark in thy hall. Erragon, king of ships! chief of distant Sora! how hast thou fallen on our mountains? How is the mighty low? Son of the secret cell! dost thou delight in songs? Hear the battle of Lora: the

a The poet alludes to the religious hymns of the Culdees.

b Erragon, or Feig-thonn, signifies the rage of the waves: probably a poetical name given him by Ossian himself; for he goes by the name of Annir in tradition.

sound of its steel is long since past. So thunder on the darkened hills roars and is no more. The sun returns with his silent beams: the glittering rocks and green heads of the mountains smile.

The bay of Cona received our ships[c], from Ullin's rolling waves: our white sheets hung loose to the masts: and the boisterous winds roared through the groves of Morven. The horn of the king is sounded, and the deer start from their rocks. Our arrows flew in the woods: the feast of the hill was spread. Our joy was great on our rocks, for the fall of the terrible Swaran. Two heroes were forgot at our feast; and the rage of their bosoms burned. They rolled their red eyes in secret: the sigh bursts from their breasts. They are seen to talk together, and to throw their spears on earth. They were two dark clouds in the midst of our joy; like pillars of mist on the settled sea: it glitters to the sun, but the mariners fear a storm.

"Raise my white sails," said Ma-ronnan, "raise them to the winds of the west; let us rush, O Aldo, through the foam of the northern wave. We are forgot at the feast: but our arms have been red in blood. Let us leave the hills of Fingal, and serve the king of Sora. His countenance is fierce, and the war darkens round his spear. Let us be renowned, O Aldo, in the battles of echoing Sora."

They took their swords and shields of thongs: and rushed to Lumar's sounding bay. They came to Sora's haughty king, the chief of bounding steeds. Erragon had returned from the chase: his spear was red in blood. He bent his dark face to the ground; and whistled as he went. He took the strangers to his feasts: and they fought and conquered in his wars.

Aldo returned with his fame towards Sora's lofty walls. From her tower looked the spouse of Erragon, the humid, rolling eyes of Lorma. Her dark-brown hair flies on the wind of ocean: her white breast heaves like snow on the heath; when the gentle winds arise,

[c] This was at Fingal's return from his war against Swaran.

and slowly move it in the light. She saw young Aldo, like the beam of Sora's setting sun. Her soft heart sighed! tears filled her eyes; and her white arm supported her head. Three days she sat within the hall, and covered grief with joy. On the fourth she fled with the hero, along the rolling sea. They came to Cona's mossy towers, to Fingal, king of spears.

"Aldo of the heart of pride!" said the rising king of Morven, "Shall I defend thee from the wrath of Sora's injured king? Who will now receive my people into their halls, or give the feast of strangers, since Aldo of the little soul has carried away the fair of Sora? Go to thy hills, thou feeble hand, and hide thee in thy caves; mournful is the battle we must fight with Sora's gloomy king. Spirit of the noble Trenmor! when will Fingal cease to fight? I was born in the midst of battles[d]; and my steps must move in blood to my tomb. But my hand did not injure the weak, my steel did not touch the feeble in arms. I behold thy tempests, O Morven, which will overturn my halls; when my children are dead in battle, and none remains to dwell in Selma. Then will the feeble come, but they will not know my tomb: my renown is in the song: and my actions shall be as a dream to future times."

His people gathered round Erragon, as the storms around the ghost of night; when he calls them from the top of Morven, and prepares to pour them on the land of the stranger. He came to the shore of Cona, and sent his bard to the king; to demand the combat of thousands, or the land of many hills. Fingal sat in his hall, with the companions of his youth around him. The young heroes were at the chase, and far distant in the desart. The grey-haired chiefs talked of other times, and of the actions of their youth; when the aged Narthmor[e] came, the king of streamy Lora.

"This is no time," begun the chief, "to hear the songs of other years: Erragon frowns on the coast, and

d Comhal the father of Fingal was slain in battle against the tribe of Morni, the very day that Fingal was born; so that he may, with propriety, be said to have "been born in the midst of battles."

e Neart-mor, 'great strength.' Lora, 'noisy.'

lifts ten thousand swords. Gloomy is the king among his chiefs! he is like the darkened moon, amidst the the meteors of night."

"Come," said Fingal, "from thy hall, thou daughter of my love; come from thy hall, Bosmina[f], maid of streamy Morven! Narthmor, take the steeds[g] of the strangers, and attend the daughter of Fingal: let her bid the king of Sora to our feast, to Selma's shaded wall. Offer him, O Bosmina, the peace of heroes, and the wealth of generous Aldo: our youths are far distant, and age is on our trembling hands."

She came to the host of Erragon, like a beam of light to a cloud. In her right hand shone an arrow of gold; and in her left, a sparkling shell, the sign of Morven's peace. Erragon brightened in her presence as a rock before the sudden beams of the sun, when they issue from a broken cloud, divided by the roaring wind.

"Son of the distant Sora," begun the mildly-blushing maid, "come to the feast of Morven's king, to Selma's shaded walls. Take the peace of heroes, O warrior, and let the dark sword rest by thy side. And if thou chusest the wealth of kings, hear the words of the generous Aldo. He gives to Erragon an hundred steeds, the children of the rein; an hundred maids from distant lands; an hundred hawks with fluttering wing, that fly across the sky. An hundred girdles[b] shall also be thine, to bind high-bosomed women; the friends of the birth of heroes, and the cure of the sons of toil. Ten shells studded with gems shall shine in Sora's towers; the blue water trembles on their stars, and seems to be sparkling wine. They gladdened once the kings of the world[i], in the midst of their echoing halls. These, O hero, shall be thine; or thy white-bosomed

f Bos-mhina, 'soft and tender hand.' She was the youngest of Fingal's children.

g These were probably horses taken in the incursions of the Caledonians into the Roman province, which seems to be intimated in the phrase of "the steeds of the strangers."

b Sanctified girdles, till very lately, were kept in many families in the north of Scotland: they were bound about women in labour, and were supposed to alleviate their pains, and to accelerate the birth. They were impressed with several mystical figures, and the ceremony of binding them about the woman's waist, was accompanied with words and gestures, which showed the custom to have come originally from the druids.

i The Roman Emperors. These shells were some of the spoils of the province.

spouse. Lorma shall roll her bright eyes in thy halls; though Fingal loves the generous Aldo: Fingal! who never injured a hero, though his arm is strong."

"Soft voice of Cona!" replied the king, "tell him, that he spreads his feast in vain. Let Fingal pour his spoils around me; and bend beneath my power. Let him give me the swords of his fathers, and the shields of other times: that my children may behold them in my halls, and say, 'these are the arms of Fingal."

"Never shall they behold them in thy halls," said the rising pride of the maid. "They are in the mighty hands of heroes, who never yielded in war. King of the echoing Sora! the storm is gathering on our hills. Dost thou not foresee the fall of thy people, son of the distant land?"

She came to Selma's silent halls; the king beheld her down-cast eyes. He rose from his place in his strength, and shook his aged locks. He took the sounding mail of Trenmor, and the dark brown shield of his fathers. Darkness filled Selma's hall, when he stretched his hand to his spear: the ghosts of thousands were near, and foresaw the death of the people. Terrible joy rose in the face of the aged heroes; they rushed to meet the foe; their thoughts are on the actions of other years, and on the fame of the tomb.

Now the dogs of the chase appear at Trathal's tomb: Fingal knew that his young heroes followed them, and he stopt in the midst of his course. Oscar appeared the first; then Morni's son, and Nemi's race: Fercuth[k] showed his gloomy form: Dermid spread his dark hair on the wind. Ossian came the last. I hummed the song of other times: my spear supported my steps over the little streams, and my thoughts were of mighty men. Fingal struck his bossy shield, and gave the dismal sign of war; a thousand swords, at once unsheathed, gleam on the waving heath. Three grey-haired sons of song raise the tuneful, mournful voice. Deep and dark, with sounding steps, we rush, a gloomy ridge, along: like the shower of a storm, when it pours on the narrow vale.

k Fear-cuth, the same with Fergus, 'the man of the word,' or a commander of an army.

The king of Morven sat on his hill: the sun-beam of battle flew on the wind: the companions of his youth are near, with all their waving locks of age. Joy rose in the hero's eyes when he beheld his sons in war; when he saw them amidst the lightning of swords, and mindful of the deeds of their fathers. Erragon came on, in his strength, like the roar of a winter-stream; the battle falls in his course, and death is at his side.

"Who comes," said Fingal, "like the bounding roe, like the hart of echoing Cona? His shield glitters on his side; and the clang of his armour is mournful. He meets with Erragon in the strife! Behold the battle of the chiefs! it is like the contending of ghosts in a gloomy storm. But fallest thou, son of the hill, and is thy white bosom stained with blood? Weep, unhappy Lorma, Aldo is no more."

The king took the spear of his strength; for he was sad for the fall of Aldo: he bent his deathful eyes on the foe: but Gaul met the king of Sora. Who can relate the fight of the chiefs? The mighty stranger fell.

"Sons of Cona!" Fingal cried aloud, "stop the hand of death. Mighty is he that is now so low! and much is he mourned in Sora! The stranger will come towards his hall, and wonder why it is silent. The king is fallen, O stranger, and the joy of his house is ceased. Listen to the sound of his woods: perhaps his ghost is there; but he is far distant, on Morven, beneath the sword of a foreign foe." Such were the words of Fingal, when the bard raised the song of peace; we stopped our uplifted swords, and spared the feeble foe. We laid Erragon in that tomb; and I raised the voice of grief: the clouds of night came rolling down, and the ghost of Erragon appeared to some. His face was cloudy and dark; and an half formed sign is in his breast. Blest be thy soul, O king of Sora! thine arm was terrible in war!

Lorma sat, in Aldo's hall, at the light of a flaming oak: the night came, but he did not return, and the soul of Lorma is sad. "What detains thee, hunter of Cona? for thou didst promise to return? Has the deer

been distant far; and do the dark winds sigh round thee on the heath? I am in the land of strangers; where is my friend? But Aldo, come from thy echoing hills, O my best beloved!"

Her eyes are turned toward the gate, and she listens to the rustling blast. She thinks it is Aldo's tread, and joy rises in her face; but sorrow returns again, like a thin cloud on the moon. "And wilt thou not return, my love? Let me behold the face of the hill. The moon is in the east. Calm and bright is the breast of the lake! When shall I behold his dogs returning from the chase? When shall I hear his voice, loud and distant on the wind? Come from thy echoing hills, hunter of woody Cona!"

His thin ghost appeared, on a rock, like the watry beam of the moon, when it rushes from between two clouds, and the midnight shower is on the field. She followed the empty form over the heath, for she knew that her hero fell. I heard her approaching cries on the wind, like the mournful voice of the breeze, when it sighs on the grass of the cave.

She came, she found her hero: her voice was heard no more; silent she rolled her sad eyes; she was pale as a watry cloud, that rises from the lake to the beam of the moon. Few were her days on Cona: she sunk into the tomb: Fingal commanded his bards; and they sung over the death of Lorma. The daughters of Morven mourned for her one day in the year, when the dark winds of autumn returned.

Son of the distant land[l]! thou dwellest in the field of fame: O let thy song rise, at times, in the praise of those that fell: that their thin ghosts may rejoice around thee; and the soul of Lorma come on a moon-beam[m], when thou liest down to rest, and the moon looks into thy caves. Then shalt thou see her lovely; but the tear is still on her cheek.

l The poet addresses himself to the Culdee.

m "Be thou on a moon-beam, O Morna, near the window of my rest; when thoughts are of peace, and the din of arms is over." *Fingal, B. I.*

CONLATH AND CUTHONA:

A POEM.

The Argument.

Conlath was the youngest of Morni's sons, and brother to the celebrated Gaul, who is so often mentioned in Ossian's poems. He was in love with Cuthona the daughter of Rumar, when Toscar the son of Kinfena, accompanied by Fercuth his friend, arrived, from Ireland, at Mora, where Conlath dwelt. He was hospitably received, and according to the custom of the times, feasted three days with Conlath. On the fourth, he set sail, and coasting the island of waves, probably one of the Hebrides, he saw Cuthona hunting, fell in love with her, and carried her away, by force, in his ship. He was forced, by stress of weather, into I-thona, a desart isle. In the mean time, Conlath, hearing of the rape, sailed after him, and found him on the point of sailing for the coast of Ireland. They fought; and they, and their followers, fell by mutual wounds. Cuthona did did long survive; for she died of grief the third day after. Fingal, hearing of their unfortunate death, sent Stormal the son of Moran to bury them, but forgot to send a bard, to sing the funeral song over their tombs. The ghost of Conlath came, long after, to Ossian, to entreat him to transmit to posterity his and Cuthona's fame. For it was the opinion of the times, that the souls of the deceased were not happy till their elegies were composed by a bard.

DID not Ossian hear a voice? or is it the sound of days that are no more? Often does the memory of former times come, like the evening sun, on my soul. The noise of the chase is renewed; and, in thought, I lift the spear. But Ossian did hear a voice: who art thou, son of the night? The sons of little men are asleep, and the midnight wind is in my hall. Perhaps it is the shield of Fingal that echoes to the blast; it hangs in Ossian's hall, and he feels it sometimes with his hands. Yes! I hear thee, my friend: long has thy voice been absent from my ear! What brings thee, on thy cloud, to Ossian, son of the generous Morni! Are the friends of the aged near thee? Where is Oscar, son of fame? He was often near thee, O Conlath, when the din of battle rose.

GHOST OF CONLATH. Sleeps the sweet voice of Cona, in the midst of his rustling hall? Sleeps Ossian in his hall; and his friends without their fame? The sea rolls round the dark I-thona [a], and our tombs are not seen by the stranger. How long shall our fame be unheard, son of the echoing Morven?

a I-thona, 'is land of waves,' one of the uninhabited western isles.

Ossian. O that mine eyes could behold thee, as thou sittest, dim, on thy cloud! Art thou like the mist of Lano; or an half-extinguished meteor? Of what are the skirts of thy robe? Of what is thine airy bow? But he is gone on his blast like the shadow of mist. Come from thy wall, my harp, and let me hear thy sound. Let the light of memory rise on I-thona; that I may behold my friends. And Ossian does behold his friends, on the dark-blue isle. The cave of Thona appears, with its mossy rocks and bending trees. A stream roars at its mouth, and Toscar bends over its course. Fercuth is sad by his side: and the maid [b] of his love sits at a distance and weeps. Does the wind of the waves deceive me? Or do I hear them speak?

Toscar. The night was stormy. From their hills the groaning oaks came down. The sea darkly tumbled beneath the blast, and the roaring waves were climbing against our rocks. The lightning came often, and showed the blasted fern. Fercuth! I saw the ghost of night [c]. Silent he stood, on that bank; his robe of mist flew on the wind. I could behold his tears; an aged man he seemed, and full of thought.

Fercuth. It was thy father, O Toscar; and he foresees some death among his race. Such was his appearance on Cromla, before the great Ma-ronnan [d] fell. Ullin [e]! with thy hills of grass, how pleasant are thy vales! Silence is near thy blue streams, and the sun is on thy fields. Soft is the sound of the harp in Selama [f], and the lonely cry of the hunter on Cromla. But we are in the dark I-thona, surrounded by the storm. The billows lift their white heads above our rocks: and we tremble amidst the night.

Toscar. Whether is the soul of battle fled, Fercuth with the locks of age? I have seen thee undaunted in danger, and thine eyes burning with joy in the fight. Whether

b Cuthona the daughter of Rumar, whom Toscar had carried away by force.

c It was long thought, in the north of Stotland, that storms were raised by the ghosts of the deceased. This notion is still entertained by the vulgar; for they think that whirlwinds, and sudden squalls of wind, are occasioned by spirits, who transport themselves in that manner, from one place to another.

d Ma-ronnan was the brother of Toscar.

e Ulster in Ireland.

f Selamath, 'beautiful to behold,' the name of Toscar's palace on the coast of Ulster, near the mountain Cromla, the scene of the epic poem.

is the soul of battle fled? Our fathers never feared. Go: view the settling sea: the stormy wind is laid. The billows still tremble on the deep, and seem to fear the blast. But view the settling sea: morning is grey on our rocks. The sun will look soon from his east, in all his pride of light. I lifted up my sails, with joy, before the halls of generous Conlath. My course was by the isle of waves, where his love pursued the deer. I saw her, like that beam of the sun that issues from a cloud. Her hair was on her heaving breast; she, bending forward, drew the bow: her white arm seemed, behind her, like the snow of Cromla. Come to my soul, I said, thou huntress of the isle of waves! But she spends her time in tears, and thinks of the generous Conlath. Where can I find thy peace, Cuthona, lovely maid?

CUTHONA[g]. A distant steep bends over the sea, with aged trees and mossy rocks: the billows roll at its feet; on its sides is the dwelling of roes. The people call it Ardven. There the towers of Mora rise. There Conlath looks over the sea for his only love. The daughters of the chace returned, and he beheld their downcast eyes. Where is the daughter of Rumar? But they answered not. My peace dwells on Ardven, son of the distant land.

TOSCAR. And Cuthona shall return to her peace; to the halls of generous Conlath. He is the friend of Toscar: I have feasted in his halls. Rise, ye gentle breezes of Ullin, and stretch my sails towards Ardven's shores. Cuthona shall rest on Ardven: but the days of Toscar will be sad. I shall sit in my cave in the field of the sun. The blast will rustle in my trees, and I shall think it is Cuthona's voice. But she is distant far, in the halls of the mighty Conlath.

CUTHONA. Oh! what cloud is that? It carries the ghosts of my fathers. I see the skirts of their robes, like grey and watry mist. When shall I fall, O Rumar? Sad Cuthona sees her death. Will not Conlath behold me, before I enter the narrow house[b]?

g Cuthona, 'the mournful sound of the waves;' a poetical name given her by Ossian, on account of her mourning to the sound of the waves; her name, in tradition, is Gormhuil, 'the blue-eyed maid.'

b The grave.

OSSIAN. And he will behold thee, O maid: he comes along the rolling sea. The death of Toscar is dark on his spear; and a wound is in his side. He is pale at the cave of Thona, and shows his ghastly wound. Where art thou with thy tears, Cuthona? the chief of Mora dies. The vision grows dim on my mind: I behold the chiefs no more. But, O ye bards of future times, remember the fall of Conlath with tears: he fell before his day; and sadness darkened in his hall. His mother looked to his shield on the wall, and it was bloody [i]. She knew that her hero died, and her sorrow was heard on Mora. Art thou pale on thy rock, Cuthona, beside the fallen chiefs? Night comes, and day returns, but none appears to raise their tomb. Thou frightest the screaming fowls away, and thy tears for ever flow. Thou art pale as a watry cloud, that rises from a lake.

The sons of the desart came, and they found her dead. They raise a tomb over the heroes; and she rests at the side of Conlath. Come not to my dreams, O Conlath; for thou hast received thy fame. Be thy voice far distant from my hall; that sleep may descend at night. O that I could forget my friends; till my footsteps cease to be seen! till I come among them with joy! and lay my aged limbs in the narrow house!

[i] It was the opinion of the times, the arms left by the heroes at home, became bloody the very instant their owners were killed, though at ever so great a distance.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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